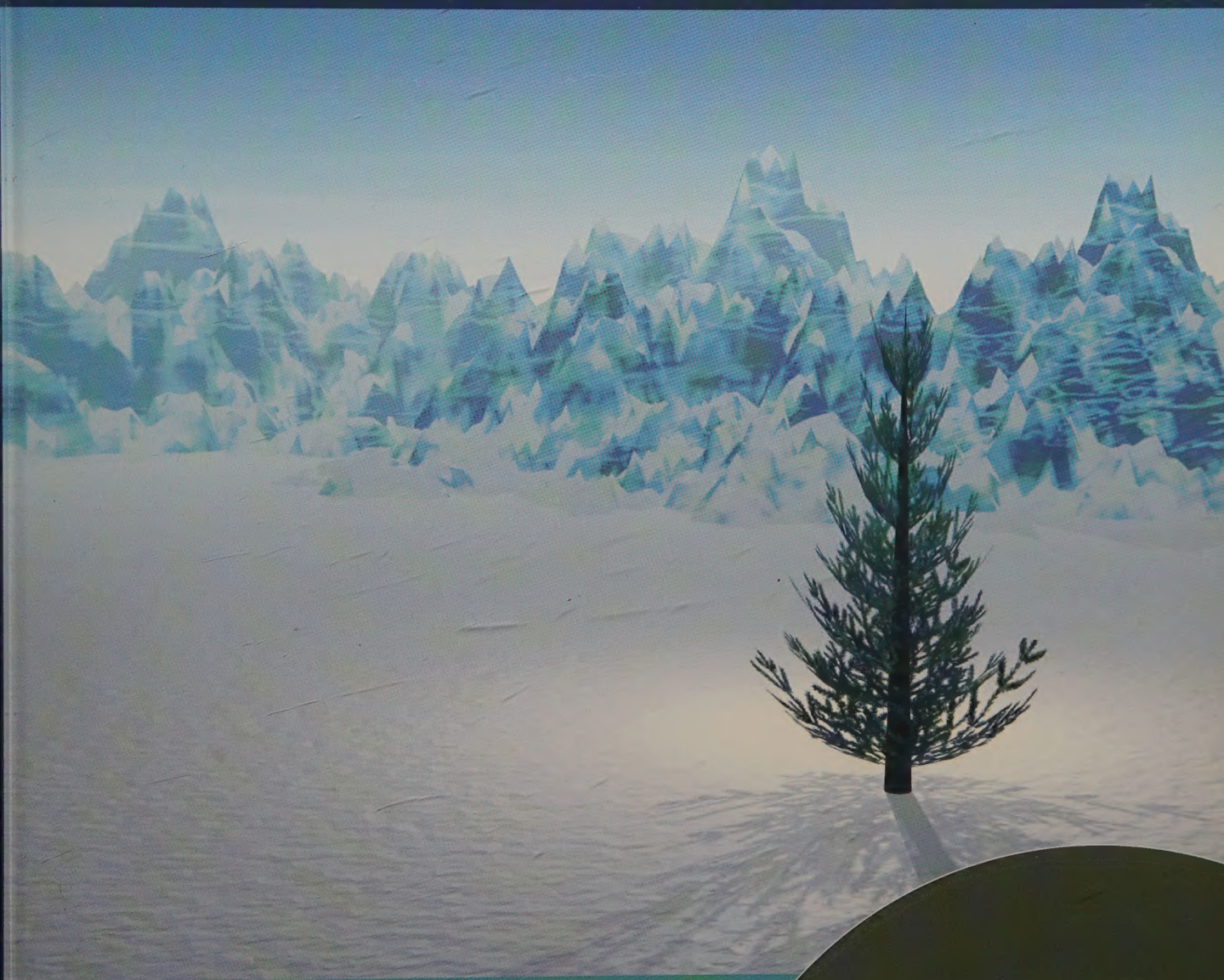


HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Volume 31 : Number Four : Winter 2010



DISILLUSIONMENT AND HOPE

Disillusionment and the Hardening Heart

Countering Disillusionment with Wisdom

Hope: Light in the Time of Darkness

PROCESSED

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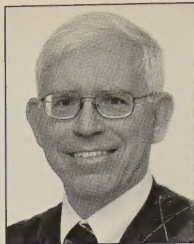
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Letters are welcome and will be published as space permits and at the discretion of the editors. Such communications should not exceed 600 words and are subject to editing.

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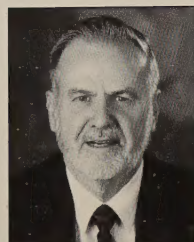
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Robert M. Hamma, M.Div., is Editorial Director at Ave Maria Press in Notre Dame, Indiana, and is the author of numerous books and articles on prayer, spirituality, and family life. He lives in Indiana with his wife and children.



FOUNDING EDITOR

James J. Gill, S.J., M.D., a priest and psychiatrist, died peacefully on July 29, 2003, after a courageous battle with prostate and bone cancer.



SENIOR EDITOR

Loughlan Sofield, S.T., M.A., has conducted workshops on psychology and ministry in North and South America, Europe, Australia, Africa, Asia and India.



SENIOR EDITOR

Brenda Hermann, M.S.B.T., M.S.W., is a facilitator and consultant to groups and organizations. She has worked in the United States, Canada, Europe, the Middle East, Asia, Africa, Australia, Central America, and South America.



SUBSCRIPTION MANAGER

Kate Sullivan, M.S., has worked for HUMAN DEVELOPMENT MAGAZINE since its inception in 1980. She has worked in many positions for the magazine and is currently in charge of marketing and subscriptions.

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Editor's Page

Dreams, Disillusionment and Hope



We all have dreams that we cherish, dreams that we believe are rooted in the possibility of fulfillment. With careful preparation, hard work, the right circumstances and a measure of grace, we hope that our dreams can come true. And that hope spurs our energy and creativity. Our dreams are not only for ourselves, but for our families and communities, our church and our world.

What happens when the dream encounters resistance or setbacks? Perhaps we will work harder, modify our expectations, or re-examine our original vision and reshape it. We do this all the time. But there may come a time, after many attempts to revisit and reshape the dream, when we begin to question the viability of our dream. The possibility of the dream coming true in any real way begins to fade. The dream seems an illusion and the dreamer loses hope. We begin to become disillusioned.

Disillusionment is not the same thing as depression. Though the depressed person may be disillusioned, the disillusioned person may not be depressed. Disillusionment cannot be treated with mood elevating drugs and it may not be as all encompassing as depression. But it can be as destructive to the spirit as depression, breeding corrosive attitudes that are harmful to oneself and others—cynicism, resentment, apathy, and indifference.

How does one hold back the rising tide of disillusionment? Where can one find hope? In these times of prolonged economic hardship and loss of confidence in the institutions that are the fabric of our lives, these are pressing questions. Some people choose to opt out. Finding it all too much to bear, they retreat as far as possible from the complexity and demands of involvement. Others seem to engage in a different form of denial. They seem to suppress the emotional and spiritual impact of the loss of the dream and move blithely on to whatever presents itself as the next thing to do.

Finding hope requires, first of all, confronting the reality of denial and recognizing that the stance of denial by others can have a withering effect on us, even to the point of tempting one to engage in it. Accepting reality is painful. Anger and discouragement have to be acknowledged and expressed. Hope can only begin with the clear-eyed vision of the way things actually are. Then one can move through the stages of grieving toward some acceptance. It may take time.

But once reality has been accepted, the question must be asked anew: Is there any basis for keeping this dream alive? This is a difficult question to answer, but avoiding it only allows disillusionment to grow. One must answer this question or stay mired in discouragement. Both a positive and a negative answer to it bring their own challenges.

If the dream is still viable in some form, a number of tasks follow.

First, one must recognize and resist the forces of disillusionment that are at work. This requires a vigilant and honest assessment of how cynicism, resentment, apathy or indifference are at work in oneself and others. This is an ongoing process. Second, it requires a more radical effort to reshape the vision according to the changing circumstances. This calls for a careful reading of the signs of the times, a willingness to listen to others and an openness to new possibilities.

There is of course the other possibility, that the dream has died and it is time to move on to a new vision. Starting anew does not mean that the dream was wrong or the dreamer was deluded. It helps to take responsibility for one's own part in its failure as well as to recognize that others contributed to it. But guilt and blame are ultimately unproductive. When the time has passed, one must move on to something new. Only then can hope begin again. Only then is there the possibility of the Phoenix rising from the ashes.

This issue of HUMAN DEVELOPMENT explores the landscape of disillusionment and hope from various perspectives. Stephen Bennett and Mary Elizabeth Kenel offer psychological considerations. Eugene Hemrick and Regina Coll have provided personal/spiritual reflections. Joseph Tetlow writes on disillusionment and Ignatian spirituality. We asked four contributors to write on what gives them hope today, two of whom write from an international perspective. And we feature an account of a personal journey through disillusionment to hope by Joseph Weigman, a priest who lives with multiple sclerosis.

Would that there were easy answers to this challenging subject. But we trust you will find much to consider here as you seek out the sources of hope in your own lives.

Robert M. Hamma

Robert M. Hamma

Beginning in 2011 HUMAN DEVELOPMENT will no longer send subscribers 3 renewal notices. As a way to save on postage and stationary, we will send only 2 notices. The first will arrive 3 months before your expiration date. The second will arrive 1 month after your expiration. We will also be sending all of our online subscribers a renewal notice by e-mail. This too will help us keep our costs down. Thanks for your cooperation!



Stephen B. Bennett, Ph.D.

Disillusionment and the **HARDENING** Heart

It is not truth that rules the world but illusions.

Soren Kierkegaard

Though we live much of our lives outside, in action and engagement with the world, the deeper impact of what happens is registered in the narrative of the heart.

John O'Donohue

Many people today sense that a thick feeling of disillusionment hangs over our communities, our economic affairs, our political discourse, and our physical environment. The daily news is, more often than not, a series of disturbing revelations regarding the thoughtless and disreputable practices of a large corporation, a governmental

agency, a political party or candidate, a minister or priest, or the news organization itself. We hardly need to be reminded of the quiet tragedies and misfortunes that haunt the edges of our awareness—political talk shows spilling polarizing rage into the airways, readily accessible pornographic images, tedious volumes of abstract information and puerile conversation filling the Internet, and waste products crowding our landfills and waterways. We are at once discouraged by these developments and at the same time turn away from them. Faced with their frightening enormity and pernicious persistence, we quietly struggle with our own feelings of impotence, fear and resignation. More dangerously, we may begin to sense a thick cloud of disillusionment blanketing our hearts.

These curious expansions of business, media, and technological and political influence have raised powerful, vast questions for us. What is the intent of all this activity, what values or virtues are they serving, and who is driving these forces on? What future are they leading us toward? It is these vacuous, pokerfaced questions that cast the dark shadow of disillusionment over our hearts. As a psychotherapist, I have the opportunity to hear what this disillusionment sounds like on a more personal level. "How could they fire me after I had given them so many good years of service? How is it that I feel so powerless, anxious and tired all the time? How could my father, spouse or religious leader betray me like this? What has happened that I have lost my faith in God, in others, and in myself?" These questions, like the more social and environmental questions above, resonate in a dark, unresponsive vacuum. In disillusionment, we find ourselves alone, hearts broken, minds reeling, with no illusions to comfort us and no trustworthy voices to speak to us.

THE MANIPULATION OF DESIRE

To say in disillusionment that we have no trustworthy voices to speak to us is to recognize that we face a world that often fails to address our heart's longing and desire. The Irish author John O'Donohue describes this contemporary landscape as one deliberately designed to manipulate our desire.

Our consumerist culture thrives on the awakening and manipulation of desire. This is how advertising works. It stirs our desire and then cleverly directs it toward products. Advertising is the schooling of false desire and relies on our need to belong, to play a central part in society and not exist merely on the fringes of it. And because awakened desire is full of immediacy, it wants gratification and does not want to be slowed down or wait. It wants no distance to open between it and the object of desire; it wants it now. This manipulation of desire accounts for the saturation of our culture with products that we don't need but are made to feel we do. There is no end to this false desire. Like the consumption of fast food, it merely deepens and extends the hunger. It satisfies nothing in the end (O'Donohue, 2007, p. 43).

Political and commercial advertising now has the power to present us with collective, distorted images of anorexic beauty, counterfeit love, muscular health and excessive financial well-being. Facebook or email make seductive promises to alleviate our social alienation and loneliness. Hundreds of cable channels delude us into imagining that we are actively engaged in the world when in fact we are becoming mere passive spectators. It appears that we are inundated with images that promise much, but fail to orient us.

As Donohue mentions, these technological images betray their superficiality and thinness because, fundamentally, they fail to satisfy us. To the contrary, they deepen our hunger, alienate and disorient us. In contrast to the images of longing that naturally arise from our heart's desire, we could describe this technological landscape as creating "simulated" images which over the last century have slowly cultivated the sense that we now live in a simulated world.

Our simulated world has come into being as the offspring of more than a hundred years of industrialization and technological development. We rarely consider that psychotherapy itself is only one hundred years old and that it came into being as a response to humanity's growing alienation from the natural world, which O'Donohue refers to as the hunger of false desire. Freud, in fact, first referred to himself, not as a psychiatrist, but as an "alienist."

One of the more destructive and disillusioning aspects of our progression into scientific materialism has been that this simulated world of technological and commercial images, made up of facts and information, has slowly eroded the narrative fabric of our culture. Traditions of knowledge are passed down from generation to generation through facts and information, but the traditions of wisdom require a memory of and a fidelity to the mysterious images which come to us through story, fable, parable, myth and scripture. These images move and educate the heart, protecting us from the false desire and the simulated imagination of advertising. At the turn of the nineteenth century, at the same time that Freud was witnessing our growing alienation, Walter Benjamin, a literary critic and writer of children's stories, made the observation that this increase in information and decline of story consciousness was leading to nothing less than the loss of our ability to "see" our own experience.

More and more often there is embarrassment all around when the wish to hear a story is expressed. It is as if something that seemed inalienable to us, the securest among our possessions, were taken from us: *the ability to exchange experiences*. One reason for this phenomenon is obvious: experience has fallen in value. And it looks as if it is continuing to fall into bottomlessness. Every glance at a newspaper demonstrates that it has reached a new low. . . . Every morning brings us news of the globe, and yet we are poor in noteworthy stories. This is because no event any longer comes to us without already being shot through with explanation. In other words, by now almost nothing that happens benefits storytelling; *almost everything benefits information* (Benjamin, 1968, p. 85).

We might say that as we have become evermore indoctrinated by centuries of rational, scientific binary thought, we have lost our awareness of the heart as an organ of perception. Part of our great collective disillusionment, seen so clearly in our vast, vacuous questions and disappointments, is that we have become isolated and marooned within the mind, its conceptualizations and its neurology. We stand as if in a vast desert of anxiety and doubt. The theologian Henry Corbin describes this contemporary predicament and condition of consciousness as having developed an "agnostic reflex" (Corbin, 1995). This agnostic reflex involves an immediate, statistical, mental abstraction of our experience that separates and isolates our consciousness from its object—the separation of thought from the living qualities of being.

THE HEART'S PERSPECTIVE

So what would it mean for us to once again develop a sense of the heart as an organ of perception? The lesson that our powerful contemporary disillusionment teaches us is a serious one. At the hands of our technical, scientific training, we have come to associate illusion with falseness or distortions of reality. However, disillusionment does not mean we are tricked by distortions and illusions, rather it means we are "deprived" or robbed of our illusions. Illusions, as Kierkegaard suggests in the introductory quote, are a way *into* the world. Illusions are the very substance of fiction, memory and story creation . . . and they are necessary to recovering the heart as an organ of perception.

Fantasy and illusion are the modes of perception that allow us entrance into the mystery of things and beings, human or divine. Illusion comes from the root word, *ludere*, to play. In contrast to our dominant materialistic view, which sees things and beings as objects, perception is a mixing of the inner mystery of our own being with the being and qualities of the world. This is a subtle, imaginative engagement that builds capacities over time—like learning to play music, play sports, dance, practice one's art or trust the rhythm of love. *The Art of Inquiry*, Coppin and Nelson remind us of this childlike aptitude.

People individuate by moving toward what presents itself as *other* in their lives in much the same way children, guided only by their eagerness to explore what they have never encountered, discover their delight in the things of the world. This kind of play is a commitment of time as well as emotion, intellect, sensation, and imagination (Coppin and Nelson, 2005, p. 147).

As we know in any conversation, perception is the play of words, images and gestures both reveal and, at the same time, conceal qualities, meanings and intention. Parables and stories conceal their meanings, just as readily as they reveal

We might say that as we have become evermore indoctrinated by centuries of rational, scientific binary thought, we have lost our awareness of the heart as an organ of perception.

their secrets. We may have to wait years before we are prepared to see their significance. The “whole” usually escapes us, but we are “in the game,” we sense a mood, an image, have a fantasy or an illusion which informs us, through the heart, that we are close to the mystery of an experience. When we perceive through our heart, we know that the world is not a dense, materialistic boundary or a construction of atoms. Rather we sense that the things of the world, in fact, have an interiority and this interiority is a threshold to invisible realities and possibilities.

From the perspective of the heart, the world reveals that it has much in common with the dramatic make-up of our dreams and that it is constantly prepared to surprise us if we can but see through its dark mirror. James Hillman reminds us in *The Thought of the Heart and the Soul of the World* that the reflections of the heart are physiognomic and gestural and tied to our deepest longings and desires. To perceive, the heart must imagine. It must see shapes, forms, faces, angels, demons, creatures of every sort in things of any kind; thereby the heart’s thought, just like the playfulness of dreams, personifies, ensouls, and animates the world (Hillman, 1981).

Without the play of fantasy and illusion, our hearts and its desires are disillusioned. We have forgotten that the link between the heart, our organs of sense—touch, hearing, taste, warmth, smell, vision—and the shining world is not one of simple mechanical sensationalism or physiology. Rather, it is aesthetic. As art teaches us, everything we know and feel and every statement we make are all fantasy-based, that is, they derive from psychic images. These images and shadows of the heart are not merely the flotsam of memory, the reproduction of visual perceptions, rearranged leftovers from the input of our lives. Rather as C. G. Jung taught us, fantasy images need to be taken in the poetic sense, considering images to be the basic givens of psychic life, self-originating, inventive, spontaneous, complete, and organized in archetypal patterns. Fantasy images are both the raw materials and the finished products of the psyche, and they are the privileged mode of access to knowledge of the soul. Nothing is more primary. Every notion in our minds, each perception of the world and sensation in ourselves must go through a psychic organization in order to “happen” at all. Every single feeling or observation occurs as a psychic event by first forming a fantasy-image (Hillman, 1975).

One might still be quite suspicious of this praise of fantasy and illusion. Are not illusions, fantasies and deception the very by-products and distortions of our modern world? Again, in contrast to living fantasy, the simulated images from our consumer culture are dead and “already finished.” That is why they fail to satisfy. In being merely entertaining, they fail to resonate with the deeper rhythms of the heart. Rather than entering and resonating with the silent perceptiveness of the heart, simulated images increase our internal noise, distract

our attention and usher us onto the path of stress, ADD, burnout and a host of modern disorders.

When we speak of the heart’s capacity to resonate, we are already sensing its return as an organ of perception. For this resonance—its movement, its capacity to break, bleed, expand, whisper, sink, sing, or leap for joy—are all descriptions that allow us to see that, unlike the head, the heart is an organ that is capable of sensing rhythm and the qualities of temporality. The heart perceives the movement of time. One can even easily imagine that the heart is shaped like a musical instrument with resounding chambers that allow us to discern what moves us. We recognize the presence of anxiety, depression, grief, intimacy or hope by its emotion, its rhythm and tempo. Depression takes us back into the past, intimacy ushers in the living present and hope brings into focus the possibilities of the future. We are beings in the ebb and flow of time and eternity.

READING THE WORLD ANEW

If disillusionment feels hopeless, it is, in fact, reflecting our experience of losing this imaginative capacity to sense the movement of time, the meaning of the past, the familiarity of the present or the promise of the future. With political and commercial media presented as simulated images, we experience the trauma of a dead reproduction and our sense of time is truncated to an empty, ravagingly hungry and uniform present. Once this narrowing and deadening of time numbs us, we are thrown back upon the existential commotion of our lonely inner life.

Recently, I was presented with a situation that reflected this very dilemma. I had been seeing a fifteen-year-old girl in counseling for a couple of months. She came to one session in distress over having lost her iPod. As she began to describe her despair, I realized that she was speaking as if she had misplaced her heart. In fact, she wore her iPod like a necklace, hanging close to her chest. She wept that all her music, all the songs and rhythms she cared about, had been secretly collected in that box. She claimed that she wasn’t sure she could feel alive and real without these familiar melodies, voices and images that reminded her of who she was and what she cared about. Without these touching tunes, she worried that an encroaching anxiety or loneliness might consume her. Even as she described her predicament, she clutched her chest where her absent iPod had once been at the heart of life. All the music she so dearly wished to hear had been collected in a small technological device; now she was left to listen to the noisy intonation of her own experience, which seemed to arise out of an empty heart.

In the presence of living images and fantasies arising from desire, the resonance of the heart announces itself within the silence of the body. The silence that surrounds the images and

fantasies that arise out of our heart's desire often have a numinous quality that, in its warm, dream-like currents, introduces us to stillness. This stillness is an invitation to a conversation that has the quality of prayer. In the silence surrounding our desires and feeling, we can hear the echoes of the invisible forces that have brought our very being into existence in the first place. We sense that our inner life of desire, impulse and feeling is bigger than we are. We glimpse that our desires and feelings, although they initiate us into the dark depth and complex breadth of life, are, in fact, gifts and presences that must be acknowledged with reverence and gratitude. Ann and Barry Ulanov refer to this resonant silence where we first encounter the movements of the soul as our "primary speech;" the awareness that in the heart-felt silence of these primal images and fantasies, we are not only being brought to awareness, we are also being spoken to (Ulanov, 1982).

Sensing the very movement of our desire as a form of primary speech, prayer or conversation with spiritual presences delays our agnostic reflex from being immediately reduced onto the couch of disillusionment. A reverence for these sparks and murmurs of life reminds us that this is one of the ways that God moves through us and reveals God's self to us. When, in our disillusionment, we find no illusions to comfort us and no trustworthy voices speaking to us, we must remember that our own elemental experience is already a "primary speech" in which our hearts are always engaged. In the Ulanovs' words, this primary speech is where we know we are never alone. We are merely students of our own being and of God's grace.

Desire leads each of us to begin praying from the premise of being, of who we are. What will sooner or later become our discipline in prayer starts in discipleship. We are students of being as we experience it. We notice what our own way is. We give our central attention to what we are saying and what we are already speaking for others to hear in our actions, words and feelings. We can see the primary way in which we already are speaking to God and God is speaking to us. Prayer is taking notice of that speaking back and forth and joining our voice to it consciously (Ulanov, 1982, p. 17).

Our bodies are deeply, unconsciously immersed and engaged in the wisdom of the world. This wisdom appears at those thresholds where the human and the divine converge. It is at these points of convergence that fantasy, illusion and enchantment are born and sustain our heart's capacity to see. However, often in contemporary discourse, agnostic minds and hardened hearts conceal these thresholds. We are now at a time that we must learn to read and hear our world anew, recognizing that the soul makes its home in the numinous images concealed in our moods and desire. Let us pray that we learn to do so, soon.

RECOMMENDED READING

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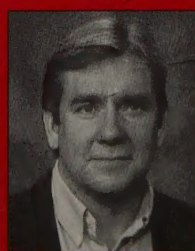
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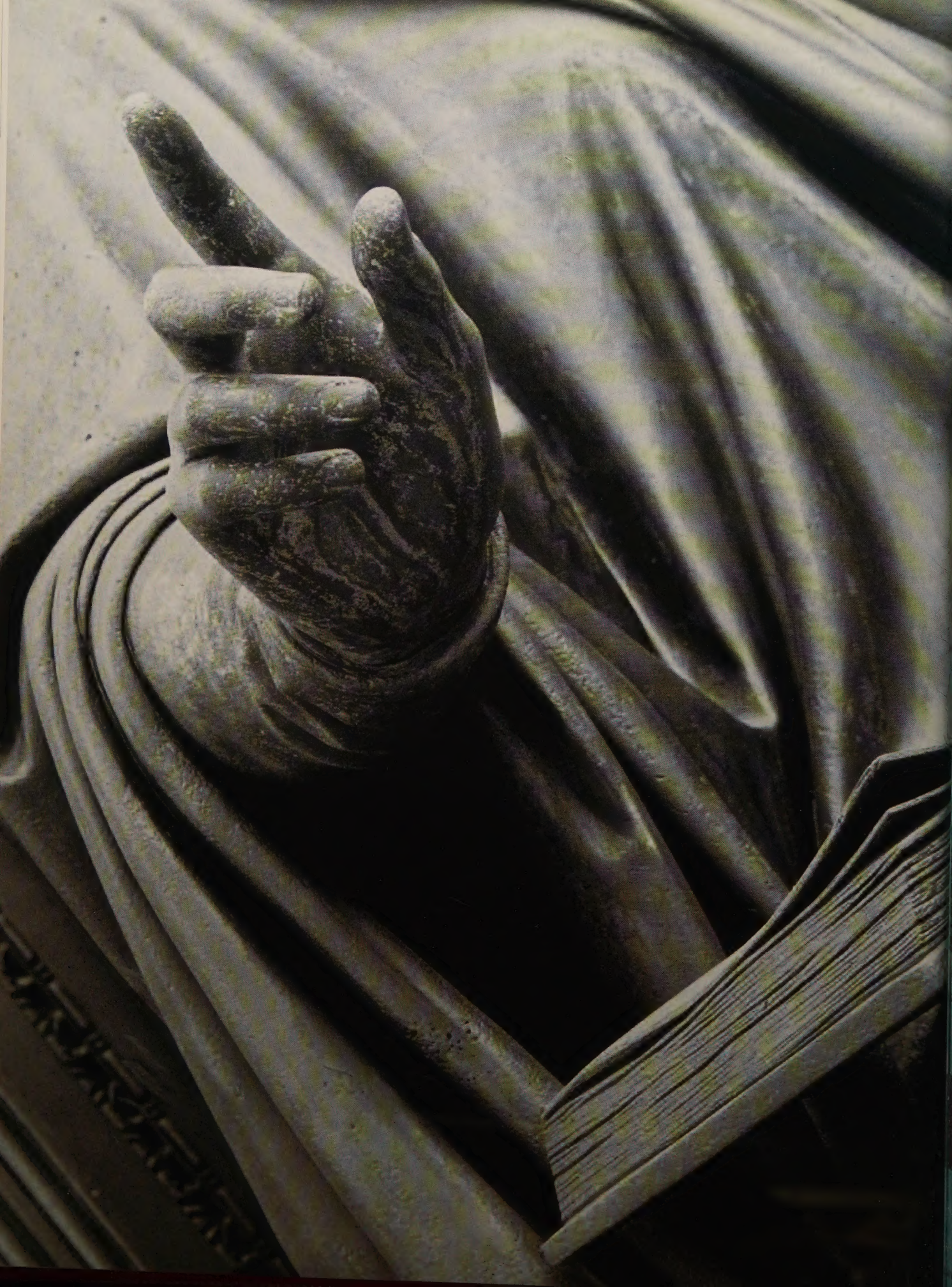
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Stephen B. Bennett is a licensed professional counselor and professor in the Department of Counseling at Regis University in Denver.



THE SUBVERSION OF THE SPIRIT

These quotes are the tip of the iceberg when it comes to describing the effects of disillusionment on us. The word disillusionment means to “take away one’s ideals or idealism,” “to be disappointed, bitter.” It strikes all walks of life: husbands and wives becoming disillusioned with each other or disappointed in their children, disenchantment with the government or the church, dissatisfaction with our work. The list of disillusionments seems endless. Its common denominator is the subversion of our spirit. What is the spirit of which we speak?

A healthy, wholesome spirit is perhaps best described by the virtue of kindness. A wholesome spirit is well-disposed toward life, toward friends, oneself, and especially God. Being well-disposed generates zest for life. We arise in the morning looking forward to the day. It also generates a confident faith in those around us.

The renowned theologian Romano Guardini tells us that the two essential qualities of progress are a sure faith and a zest for life. When we combine them with the quality of courage, a magnificent portrait of the spirit emerges. Guardini states:

Courage is the confidence requisite for living with a view to the future, for acting, building, assuming responsibilities and forming ties. For, in spite of our precautions, the future is in each case the unknown. But living means advancing into this unknown

region, which may lie before us like a chaos into which we must venture.

Note the qualities of optimism, hopefulness, confidence and a sense of adventure ringing through this definition. We live for the future, we want to bond with others to insure our future’s well being, and we are desirous of shouldering our duties to make this happen. Much may be unknown, yet we aspire to venture out into the undefined.

When disillusionment grips us, it stifles the qualities of which Guardini speaks and is anything but music to our ears. It reminds me of a song sung by Peggy Lee which envisions the stages of life being weary. After each stage, she sings the refrain, “Is that all there is to life? Is that all there is?” The hopelessness, pessimism, apathy and depression that ring through this song are the direct antithesis to one of Frank Sinatra’s best known songs. In that song, a person reflects on the stages in his or her life and ends with the refrain, “It was a very good year, it was a very good year.”

One of disillusionment’s side effects is that it mutates and takes many different forms: shock, disbelief, a shattered world-view, depression, despair, gloom, melancholy, despondency, dissatisfaction, discontent, unrest, discord, indifference and a host of other negative manifestations.

Another of its troubling side effects is found in a quote by the French philosopher Voltaire, “Having never succeeded in the world, he took his revenge by speaking ill of it.” We have to wonder how many persons experience

Disillusionment has many forms. Betrayal by a friend as described in Psalm 55 but one among many that can strike us. British poet John Keats once stated, “There is nothing stable in the world, uproar is your only music.” One glance at the violence happening in our own countries and around the world confirms how true and disillusioning this is.

French novelist Gustave Flaubert counsels us, “We shouldn’t touch our idols: the gilt comes off on our hands.” Written in the 1800s, this sage observation is as pertinent today as it was then. When we reflect on prominent public figures who were heroes one day and a disgrace the next, we realize how fleeting our awe for another can be.

The French writer Simone de Beauvoir observes, “If you live long enough, you’ll see that every victory turns into a defeat.” While not every victory may end in defeat, it is true that much of what we achieve is often replaced or dismantled by those coming after us, leaving us to wonder what we really accomplish with our lives.

COUNTERING

DISILLUSIONMENT

WITH WISDOM

Rev. Eugene Hemrick

*History teaches
us how to live
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the shattering of their world-view and turn to terrorism because of despondency?

COUNTERING
DISILLUSIONMENT

What might be our best means for countering disillusionment? One place to start is history, the history of civilization and salvation history found in the scriptures. Why do we point to history? The great historian Charles Oman gives us one good reason. "The human record is illogical . . . and history is a series of happenings with no inevitability about it."

The root of disillusionment is often the illogic and uncertainty of life: things just don't add up, they shouldn't be happening, they are incomprehensible. This can lead to thoughts like "Why try to 'fix' society, get involved with it or believe in anything?" "Why attempt to make sense of an uncertain, senseless world?" "If this is all there is to life, why not live it to the hilt and forget all this bunk about loyalty and devotedness?" Disillusionment turns the spirit sour, destroying goodness, faith and kindness.

History teaches us how to live with uncertainty and the illogical in life by broadening our understanding of life's realities. It teaches us to broaden our perception and to look at the bigger world. A beautiful lunette in the Library of Congress pictures Wisdom sitting atop the proverb, "Wisdom is the principal thing, by all means get wisdom, and with all thy getting, get understanding." By

demonstrating that life is often illogical and uncertain, history teaches us to understand all sides of life and to get us out of our narrow conception of it. Above all, history shows us that contradictions and uncertainty have been and always will be an integral part of life.

In an interview with a priest who was considered very effective in his diocese, we asked how he copes with disappointments. "You have to live with the gaps. There are always going to be gaps, so you have to live with the gaps," was his reply. Put another way, we have to broaden our understanding by realizing we can't understand everything. To accept this insight is wisdom, an excellent antidote for curing disillusionment.

History also has an ironic calming side to it. Some time back when Israel and the whole Middle East was in chaos, I remember feeling extremely down about the thought of never seeing peace in our lifetime. At that same time I happened to receive a copy of the book, *The Ten Books on the Way of Life and Great Deeds of Carmelites*. A paragraph in it caught my attention and was just what I needed to dispel my gloom.

When the crusader forces conquered Jerusalem in 1099, to great acclaim throughout Christendom, it was thought that the Latin kingdom then established would endure for centuries, thus preserving the Holy Land in Christian hands. However, this was not to be the case, and it was not long



before the Moslem forces, regrouping under their new leader Saladin, inflicted defeat on the Christian army at the Battle of Hattin in 1187.

As I read this, I laughed and thought, "As it was then so it is now, here we go again." History helps us to see reality as it is, not the way we often would like it to be. Facing reality has a calming effect by countering the feeling that something disastrous is happening for the first time in our history. It teaches us to calm down and look at the whole picture of humankind, to see we aren't alone when it comes to disillusioning events. It also teaches us that just as others had to endure the unthinkable, so too, do we have to endure. Equally important, it teaches us that just as they didn't stop but kept going, so too, are we expected to keep going. The understanding generated by history is the direct antithesis to narrow thoughts of gloom, doom and fears that everything is beyond recovery. It teaches us that Haiti will rebuild and be a better country despite the earthquake; that the Gulf of Mexico will recover; that disasters, as horrific as they are, are often not the end but the beginning of new life.

CONSIDERING GOD'S WAYS

When we turn from secular history to salvation history, we learn that God draws straight with crooked lines. Take the life of King David, for example. He is God's chosen one who writes sacred

psalms, builds the city of Jerusalem and unites Israel as best as possible. So far, all is to our liking, it is logical and the way it should be according to God's plan. But then David murders Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, to cover up an affair he had with her: a total disconnect. Disconnects like this are found throughout salvation history. But why is this so? My wise old grandfather, a shepherd who immigrated to America from Italy, gives us one good answer.

When I would get uptight about something that seemed immoral or illogical, he would say to me, "Gini, it is all in the Bible. Read the Bible and you will learn nothing in this world is new." His insight was straightforward: Sin exists, yet the Bible teaches that there is a reality beyond our comprehension: God's mysterious plan. We often picture God controlling everything to God's liking, but a closer look at the Bible demonstrates that events happen that aren't to God's liking. We are invited to enter into divine mystery, to trust God, to try and see a deeper meaning in what seems illogical. Pondering God's ways keeps our minds active and positive, and is one of our best means for countering the paralysis disillusionment generates.

Going on the offense like this fits in perfectly with the thinking of English philosopher, Sir Philip Sidney who states, "They are never alone that are accompanied with noble thoughts." He encourages us to immerse ourselves in wholesome, uplifting ideas and activities, to fill our minds with

goodness, beauty and that which raises our dignity, wisdom and prudence. He would tell us that it is better to err on the side of being overly idealistic and optimistic than falling into pessimism and cynicism.

We have an old proverb in Italian, "*Chi dorme coi cani, si leve con le pulsi.*" It translates: he or she who sleeps with dogs awakes with fleas. In other words, avoid bad company such as disillusioning literature, companions, and movies that speak only of the dark side of life, all its failings and incongruities. This is not to say we should censure out the dark side of reality or give a blind eye to it. Rather, it is to use common sense and balance the good with the bad. Not all is bad, as the media often portrays when reporting on world events, our government, church and the workplace. In today's highly competitive media market, reporting on exciting, uplifting happenings isn't considered as titillating or revenue generating as stories of scandals, corruption, violence and disasters. Fantastic progress, to the contrary, can be found everywhere. Imaginative creativity is all around us. And then there are God's daily blessings that are forever nourishing us. Filling our minds with these noble thoughts is needed to keep a healthy outlook on life.

In the preface of our eucharistic prayers, we are beseeched to lift up our hearts. We reply, "We lift them up to the Lord." An uplifted heart leaves no room for disillusionment.



Father Eugene F. Hemrick is a research associate at the Institute for Policy Research & Catholic Studies at Catholic University, and director of the newly formed National Institute for the Renewal of the Priesthood at the Washington Theological Union. He is a priest of the Diocese of Joliet, Illinois.

HOPE'S

Lovely

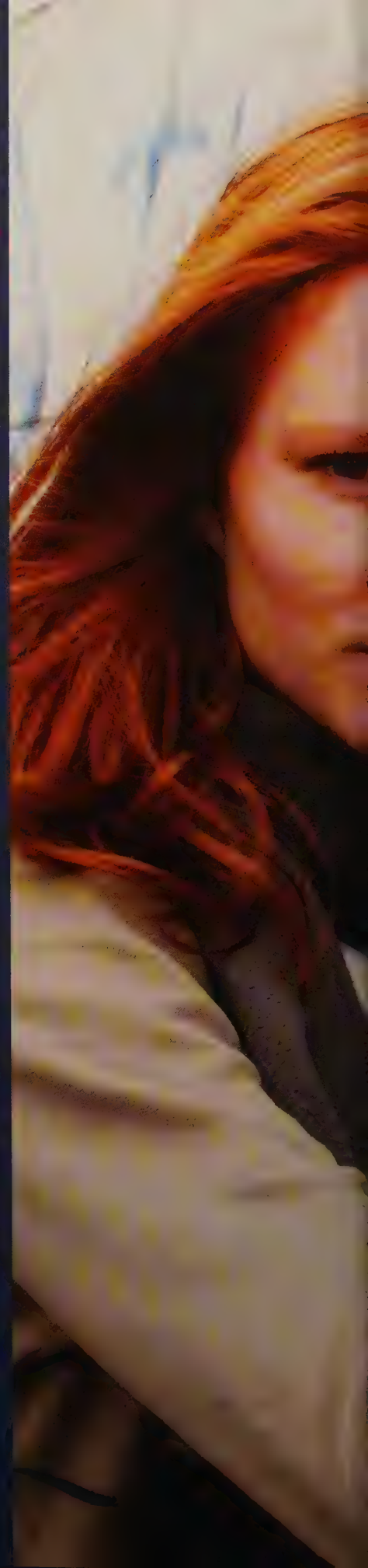
DAUGHTERS

Anger and courage—these are the words St. Augustine used when he spoke of hope. He called them hope's lovely daughters, suggesting that hope bears a close relation to them, even as they relate to one another. Augustine's lesson came home to me when I spent some time in India and experienced what I saw as a hopeless situation. It seemed to me that very little was done to alleviate the pervasive poverty and suffering because there was so little hope for change. People did not seem angry; they accepted their circumstances with equanimity. I presumed that was because there was no vision of a better possibility, nothing against which to measure the present state of affairs. No anger, therefore no courageous striving to bring about change.

Just the opposite happened a week or so after I came home. As I stood on a corner in Bedford-Stuyvesant in Brooklyn waiting for a friend, the anger in the air was palpable; you could almost breathe it in. Anger was an appropriate response to some of the oppressive situations of the people living there. They knew things should be different. They were angry because their hope provided a vision of a better life for themselves and their loved ones.

Scripture warns that hope that is lost may drain the strength needed to address difficulties; hope that is thus frustrated readily leads to a kind of disillusionment. The thwarting of an image of what should be has led some to a depressing disillusionment that is the opposite of the anger that fires up the passion that holy hope provides. Such disillusionment drains any possibility of hope; it depresses and leaves people unable to muster an appropriately angry response. A recent article in the *New York Times* captures the distinction between anger and disillusionment. Headlined "Angry Voters? For Many, Disillusionment Is More Like It," the author describes voters not "bursting with rage but spent with exhaustion." He uses words like disappointed, skeptical and hopeless. Voters have lost hope that anything will be done to solve society's problems and are overwhelmed with disillusionment.

For Christians, hope involves a vision, an insight into what God wants for human beings. It involves a conviction that God's will calls all of creation to fullness of being or as Paul expressed it, all of creation is "standing on tiptoe to see [daughters] and sons of God come into their own" (Philippians 1:20). By God's will I do not mean a blueprint or master plan laid out to which we must conform. Rather, God's will is more like a dream or hope that God may have for us. It involves the future. Richard McBrien, in his book *Catholicism*, draws on the insights of Karl Rahner, speaking of





Anger is absolutely necessary for maturity and for healthy relationships. It is basically a good emotion, and should be seen as a virtue when expressed and dealt with appropriately.

God as not being above us but “ahead of us, summoning us to create the future.” That future we know as the coming reign of God. Not to be mistaken for some kind of utopia, the metaphor “reign of God,” spoken of as “already but not yet,” is shorthand for the kingdom brought about by Jesus but not yet fully established. It represents a time of justice and peace. This reign of God will be brought about by the Holy Spirit with the cooperation of women and men through personal and societal transformation.

ANGER

Given that we usually speak of anger as a sin, Augustine’s words may at first seem strange until he explains that anger is appropriate to ensure that what should not be, will not be, and that courage is necessary so that what should be, will be. But it is hope that enables us to see both what should be and what should not be. Hope, the conviction that God can be trusted and that God wills only good for all of us, helps us to understand that whatever does not serve that good is not from God and must be overcome. Hope tells us that the evil we are confronted with is not what God wills for us; that it ought to be eliminated. Hope reminds us that something else is possible and that we can help make that something else happen. Hope impels us to strive to bring about good for people who are suffering any kind of oppression.

Hope opens us out to others, it reminds us that we are all made in the image of God and that image ties us to one another. The dogma of the Trinity reminds us that God in God’s very being is relational. Such relations make us sensitive to whatever oppresses, afflicts or threatens another or ourselves. An appropriate response to these kinds of abuses is anger. It is, indeed, in the words of Beverly Harrison, “a vivid form of caring.” We do not get angry at things that do not matter to us.

In her inaugural lecture at Union Theological Seminary, Harrison insisted, “Anger is a mode of connectedness to others and it is always a vivid form of caring The power of anger is the work of love.” She was echoing Augustine’s idea that anger is necessary for us to be loving, hopeful persons. Anger connects us to others.

We are unable to be fully human until we are able to deal with anger. Anger is absolutely necessary for maturity and for healthy relationships. It is basically a good emotion, and should be seen as a virtue when expressed and dealt with appropriately. According to Martin Padovani, repressing anger may lead to problems that are destructive of relationships and interfere with spiritual and emotional health.

If anger does not rise up in our hearts when we see people abused or oppressed, can we claim to be following the teachings of Jesus? If we are not appalled when children are abused, can we claim to be righteous people? If violence against vulnerable people does not enrage us, what kind of human beings are we? What does the incidence of homelessness and hunger in this, the richest country ever to exist, say of us Americans?

I am not speaking here of anger that is used as a weapon against others or that leads to violence or revenge. The kind of anger I speak of here is the anger that broke through the heartbreak of losing a child to enable a grieving mother to create MADD. The acronym for Mothers Against Drunk Driving says it all—these mothers are angry and are using that passion to fight an evil that causes so much suffering.

INCARNATING THE BEATITUDES

It is in striving to eliminate such suffering that we are able to incarnate the Beatitudes. According to Carter Heywood, one of the first women ordained to the priesthood in the

piscopal Church, "When a human being reaches out to comfort, to touch, to bridge the gap separating each of us from everyone else, God comes to life in that act of reaching, of touching, of bridging. The act is love and God is love. And when we love, we god." Susan Ross describes this as spreading "the good word of God's 'extravagant affections' to all and through all. God's power comes alive in the dynamic of mutual relation." We are called to be what we were created to be—fully human. But that is only possible in a society that supports human growth. We cannot define what it means to be human, let alone Christian, in isolation from the cultural forces that impede or foster human development. The emphasis placed on right relations helps us to better understand systemic sin and systemic grace. We have come to realize that social, psychological and political decisions help create structures, institutions, customs and laws that are sinful. It is the sin for which no individual tends to feel responsible because it is the result of the decisions, judgments and actions of so many. It is the sin that results when reverence and respect for human beings or others in creation is missing.

Much has been written about systemic sin. Very little attention has been paid to systemic grace in spite of the fact that we believe that where sin abounds, grace abounds more. Systems of grace address sin with reverence and respect for both human and non-human creation. They are structures, institutions, customs and laws that enable life to flourish and are rooted in hope. We need only to consider customs, laws and institutions that provide food for hungry people, shelter for the homeless, protection for the vulnerable and reverence for all to recognize systemic grace. Organizations and institutions that heal, liberate and reverence human beings and the rest of creation are systems of grace. With all their faults and failings, schools, colleges, hospitals and hospices are among the systems of

grace. Grace is all around us, waiting to be recognized. That grace grows out of hope. Addressing the evil in society with anger and courage, grace is brought to bear on that evil and fosters the coming of the reign of God.

Focusing on the experience of peoples who are suffering violence and oppression shines the light of the gospels on their lives and demands a response of anger at what threatens human life. It also demands a courageous (as well as a prudent and compassionate) response. This is the work of prophets among us.

The great prophets of all times were angry. When Bill Moyers eulogized one of those great prophets, William Sloane Coffin, he described a soul burning with "sacred rage" and a "holy flame" evidenced in his words, "When you see uncaring people in high places, everybody should be mad as hell." And "if you lessen your anger at the structures of power, you lower your love for the victims of power."

COURAGE

Courage is needed to assure that graceful (that is, full of grace) solutions will restore what God wills for creation. It takes courage to fulfill what God had in mind when we were created, becoming what God desires for us.

Courage is needed to overcome stark societal evils such as homelessness, hunger, racism or poverty. Courage, understood in its original sense of "having heart" involves more than an intellectual response to evil. It inspires passion and emotional response.

This does not mean fiery and fanatical action. Often a quiet and peaceful response is more courageous. Popular folklore presents Rosa Parks as a poor black woman who, because she was tired, refused to give up her seat on the bus to a white man. The truth of the matter is that Rosa (who probably was tired) had studied non-violence and had planned her refusal down to the last

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detail. She chose that particular bus because the driver was known to be particularly harsh and nasty to black passengers. She sat in the back that had been set aside for blacks rather than cause a problem sitting in the front white section. She did not argue or fight when ordered to give up her seat. She merely remained seated until she quietly left with the arresting officers.

Rosa Parks was not an accidental hero. She courageously faced the fear of what she knew would be the consequences of her actions. Her courage grew out of years of anger and frustration at being treated as a second class citizen, the growing critical awareness of the black community of the injustice of that situation and the study of non-violent means to address it. Hers was a courage that was calm, peaceful and dignified; it arose out of her hope that things could be different. It was also powerful enough to spark the black community to boycott the bus company and for nearly a year to walk to work, to school, to church and wherever else they needed to be. All in the hope that oppression could be overcome.

The twenty-first century icon for courage is the host of police officers and firefighters who risked their own lives to save others in the attack of 9/11. They did not rush into the burning towers naively bold, confident and unafraid. They knew the dangers involved but faced them with courage. Among their number was Father Mychal Judge, chaplain to the New York City Fire Department who was among those killed and, who at the insistence of firefighters, was listed number one on the list of victims of the 9/11 attack.

He did not have to be at Ground Zero but knew that the alarm he heard in his monastery room signaled that the firefighters might need his ministry. Franciscan that he was, he had lived a life of compassion and service to poor people, once literally giving away the coat off his back. Known for his Irish wit, he was a beloved priest who baptized,

witnessed weddings and consoled grieving firefighting families. His quiet courage, following firefighters into danger and lifting their spirits, was simply part of the pattern of his life. He died while giving the last rites to a fallen fireman.

BECOMING COURAGEOUS

Sometimes courage is required to stand for right or what we know to be true, especially when that stand is unpopular. To stand alone in the face of opposition, to hazard one's reputation or to risk one's career or relationships is not easy, but it is a test of our moral integrity. We become courageous by performing courageous acts, just as we become kind and honest by performing kind and honest acts. Facing small fears cultivates the strength and confidence needed to face greater fears with courage.

Developing a habit of recognizing both small and great examples of courage also helps to improve our own chances of becoming courageous persons. Lifting up St. Thomas More as a model of courage for us, the church provides an example of a person who paid the ultimate price for speaking truth to power. Described by his friend Erasmus as "a perfect model for friendship" and as there being "nothing from which he does not extract enjoyment," Erasmus paints a picture of a person we might like to socialize with rather than a plaster saint devoid of all feeling. More served Henry VIII faithfully as Lord Chancellor (sometimes too faithfully) but refused to take an oath accepting Henry as the supreme head of the church, knowing it would mean his death. Tradition has it that he maintained his wit to the end, telling the executioner to take care not to cut off his beard.

It would be a mistake to focus on the heroic courage of Rosa Parks, Mychal Judge and Thomas More without acknowledging the ordinary

rhythm of their lives. Each of their biographies reveals human beings very much like ourselves—sometimes impatient, sometimes thoughtless and sometimes on the wrong side of an argument—but each able to rustle up the courage needed at a significant point in their lives.

Cultivating hope, developing trust in God who wills nothing but good for all of creation, may enable us to grow in life-giving anger and courage. These "lovely daughters" of hope will enable us to create a more just and peaceful world.

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Regina Coll, C.S.J. is a Sister of Saint Joseph Brentwood, New York and retired Director of Education for the M.Div. program at the University of Notre Dame.



Hope

*Light in the
Time of Darkness*

Mary Elizabeth Kenel, Ph.D.

When we speak of disillusionment or of our being disillusioned, there is, more often than not, a sense of our losing or being deprived of some good or ideal in which we believed wholeheartedly and to which we committed time and energy. The subject of our disillusionment may be an idealized person, an institution such as the church, our idealized visions of ourselves, or a movement, be it political, religious, ecological or humanitarian, that promised an idealized future. All too often, disillusionment is accompanied by anger, cynicism, bitterness, darkness, confusion and a sense of betrayal and outrage that, left unchecked, corrodes faith and trust. It encourages apathy and negates even those ideals, goals or relationships that might have been viable.

Disillusionment sets in once the realities and limitations inherent in a person or a situation make themselves present and expose the unrealistic

expectations or "pie in the sky" promises on which we relied. Think, for example, of the investors in Bernard Madoff's investment schemes who, in hindsight, recognized they "ought to have known better" than to believe the ability of any fund, no matter how well managed, to consistently earn a high yield despite shifting markets. Think also of those who, after a short period of marriage, must struggle with the harsh fact that the fairy tale "happily ever after" ending is not an automatic happening but will require growth, compromise, and adaptation, walking through dark moments as each of the partners gives up his or her unrealistic expectations of the other and the marriage.

Disillusionment has a positive side, however. While we often perceive it as *deprivation*, it is also a *freeing from* the darkness of illusions, erroneous beliefs, misguided idealism and subtle forms of idolatry. The process of disillusion, then, is a maturational process related to the acquisition of knowledge. Self-knowl-

edge obtained in the course of psychotherapy or spiritual direction, for example, allows us to strip ourselves, sometimes painfully, of illusions or long cherished beliefs about ourselves: our importance, virtue, righteousness and our place (or lack thereof) in the scheme of things. Freed from these sometimes grandiose, sometimes demeaning, encumbrances, we are empowered to live lives of greater authenticity and integrity, our shadow side incorporated into our self-assessment, grounded in a genuine appreciation for the whole cloth of who we are.

Deepening our knowledge of people, institutions, or other entities also fosters a necessary disillusionment. Rather than casting our idealized self-images upon others, setting up unrealistic expectations that are doomed to disappointment, or demanding a standard of behavior that is rooted in our own neurotic perfectionism, in-depth knowledge of others allows us to adopt a realistic

perspective regarding the potential for good and for evil wherever we find ourselves. As the Russian-Ukrainian author Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn remarked, the line dividing good from evil passes through the center of every human heart, and, I would add, through the heart of every institution, community, or other entity as well.

As we negotiate the sometimes-treacherous paths of disillusionment, it is important that we maintain a sense of hope rather than yield to the darkness of discouragement, apathy or despair. The light hope brings is essential to a productive, satisfying, energetic life. And yet, when we speak of hope, many times it seems to be wrapped round with a dream-like quality of wishful thinking that renders the object of one's hope unrealistic and often enough opens the person holding such hope to criticism or scorn. Indeed, the passive form of hope or wishful thinking often is nothing more than a fantasy of a better future that will be given to us gratuitously by some external source of salvation that does not require our working to bring about the change we desire.

MAKING HOPE HAPPEN

Real hope, however, contains an active component, perhaps a plan or an idea that one works toward with persistence in order to achieve the desired outcome. Genuine hope serves as a light along our path as it is the recognition that we have the ability to set and meet goals and, in addition, can solve problems that arise as we pursue these goals. In their book *Making Hope Happen*, authors Diane McDermott, Ph.D., and C.R. Snyder, Ph.D., offer an active definition of hope, involving goals, waypower, and willpower. They define goals in terms of something we desire to do or to have, waypower as our perceived capability to find routes to our target goals, and willpower as the driving force in hopeful thinking that energizes us to move toward our goals.

Genuine hope is also a far cry from the exaggerated positiveness that is sometimes used in quasi-therapeutic settings in an attempt to offset pessimism, doubt and various threats to one's self-esteem. There is certainly value in challenging our tendencies to focus on the dark as we minimize the positive while maximizing the negative, or view all unwanted, unhappy events in catastrophic terms. Yet maintaining an unrealistically sunny outlook rooted in denial of the gravity of a given situation, a "don't worry, be happy" type of attitude, is not true hope. Instead what is needed is the development of a frame of mind that balances a positive view of the future with the reality that all life contains elements of darkness, be it experienced as sadness, frustration, or pain. Believing that one can devise ways to cope with these negative elements and work out a way to live well in spite of setbacks is a necessary element of hope.

Anthony Scioli, Ph.D., and Henry Biller, Ph.D., in their book *Hope in the Age of Anxiety*, indicate that attachment, mastery, and survival are key elements of hope. From their perspective, hopeful people are those who are rooted in loving attachment while having wings, namely, empowerment and resiliency that lead to mastery and survival. They see these qualities arising from a matrix composed of individual, social/cultural, and spiritual gifts. In their schema, spirituality plays an important role in the development and maintenance of hope.

Author and philosopher Ernst Bloch whose three-volume treatise *The Principle of Hope* identified our capacity to experience the "not yet" of life, concluded that the human capacity to anticipate, a capacity that often arises in the imagination, stimulates the formation of hope in our hearts. In contrast to those of his contemporaries who viewed life primarily through the lens of "angst," Bloch perceived our capacity to

anticipate, to dream and to hunger for "the more," thus placing hope at the center of human life.

We who profess faith in God, however, see beyond our capacity for self-improvement and achievement of finite goals to hope's transcendent aspect. We view the light hope provides as an opening to grace and goodness that moves us beyond the immediate present. We perceive holy hope rooted in God's wisdom and power, firmly anchoring us in our belief that we and our world are held in the loving, compassionate, strong embrace of the Merciful One who is able to draw good from seeming evil. Thanks to the gifts of faith and hope that culminate in a deep-rooted sense of trust, we have confidence that God provides light, encouragement, guidance and assistance at each juncture of our lives, building us up to take our place in the fullness of the Body of Christ.

THE SOURCE OF OUR HOPE

As Christians, our hope is grounded in the Christ-event and the sending of the Spirit. Too often, however, our spirituality seems to focus on the historical Jesus of Nazareth and the account of the Pentecost that occurred in Jerusalem. While valid starting points, concepts such as these are insufficient to give us the grounding in hope that is needed in a world where discoveries are made rapidly across a variety of fields of study ranging from astrophysics to neurobiology, psychology, genetics, and the electrochemistry of the brain. Because science and its findings infuse our lives, we cannot simply set them aside and return to traditional forms of spirituality, acting as if the modern world simply is irrelevant.

Louis M. Savary, Ph. D., in his book *Teilhard de Chardin The Divine Milieu Explained*, observed that what is needed at this time is a spirituality based on an understanding of God, creation and our role in creation that is capable of

welcoming and integrating significant scientific facts of our existence into itself. The spirituality of this sort has the potential to provide a vision of hope that is based not on the attainment of a specific outcome at a given time, but on an evolutionary view of the Cosmic Christ. As Pierre Teilhard de Chardin came to know him and an eschatological view founded on the transforming presence of this Cosmic Christ to all the human and non-human members of creation.

Although formed by the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius that taught him to delve deeply into the mind and heart of Jesus of Nazareth and to allow himself to be transformed by entering into the death and resurrection of Jesus, Teilhard de Chardin, Jesuit and scientist, invites us to focus not on the Jesus of more than two thousand years ago, but, like St. Paul, to come to recognize the risen Christ with his total body as it has evolved over two millennia. He invites us to work toward the accomplishment of the total Christ's divine destiny and identifies as our task the turning of our fragmented world into the fullness of the body of Christ through our love of all creation in its visible and invisible dimensions.

A spirituality of the sort envisioned by Teilhard de Chardin is both optimistic and future-focused. Savary, who has studied Teilhard de Chardin's works extensively, assures us that this spirituality, when translated into daily attitudes and behavior, will enable us to live consciously and constantly in what Teilhard de Chardin referred to as the Divine Milieu or what Savary refers to as the sea of divine love. This Divine Milieu is nothing other than Christ, in whom, as Paul tells us (Acts 17:28), we live, and move, and have our being. As we learn to see with new eyes, we learn to recognize not only the visible dimensions of God's love but the invisible dimensions as well. As our spiritual sight sharpens, we begin to see not only what is present but also those things that, St. Paul tells us (Ephesians 1:15-23), are yet to come.

CONFRONTING DISILLUSIONMENT

There are many facets of life that are sources of disillusionment, if not outright hopelessness, these days. The ongoing wars we are waging in Afghanistan and Iraq (despite the fact that some of our troops are coming home), the seemingly intractable enmity that hardens the hearts of Israelis and Palestinians alike, conflicts among various religious and ethnic groups in the Far East, in Africa, in Europe—these are just a few of a long list.

Within our own country, there are great divides between political groups of all stripes, between Wall Street investors and those whose dreams of economic security were ruined, between those with widely differing views on what constitutes immigration reform. Natural disasters alone might well generate a sense of hopelessness: the earthquake that devastated Haiti, the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, severe flooding in Pakistan, Kashmir, Tibet and China, the wildfires in Russia, the ongoing problems that are the legacies of the tsunami and Hurricane Katrina. In addition we are burdened with Congress' failure to pass the bill dealing with global warming while two subsequent documents detailed quite succinctly the fact that the earth's temperature has risen over the past three decades and that we humans bear a good deal of responsibility for the emission of greenhouse gases that contribute to the warming of the earth.

Our Church is not immune either. We Catholics have been buffeted by sex abuse scandals and the scandals related to the bishops' cover-up of these incidents for years. The role of women, too, has also been demeaned. A recent investigation of the communities of women religious in the United States appeared to many to be mean-spirited while the placement of the "grievous sin" of ordaining women to the priesthood in the same list as the grievous sins of sexual abuse and covering-up the abuse deeply angered many.

Taking an evolutionary perspective on various facets of world relations can be a source of hope despite specific actions or failures to act that usually would lead to profound disillusion, even despair. In an effort to ward off discouragement, we might examine Teilhard de Chardin's spirituality a bit further, finding a source of hope in his thought that the next great advance in evolutionary transformation will be found in the gradual socialization of all peoples. From his perspective, this does not mean that humanity would devolve into a herd mentality brought about by the negative effects of globalization or political indoctrination. He was not in favor of homogenization of peoples nor, I suspect, would he have been enchanted by the idea of Starbucks and McDonald's on every street corner the world over. Teilhard de Chardin did not foster the notion of a Utopian society such as those that flourished at various times in our country, often fueled by religious idealism. He definitely would not have promoted a Jonestown style of community either. Instead, he envisioned the convergence of humanity toward a single society, but one in which each individual played a unique role in building up the Total Body of Christ.

Although he died in 1955, Teilhard de Chardin felt such a movement was already underway, fostered by technology, urbanization, multinational corporations and modern communication. This is not to say Teilhard de Chardin would have endorsed the principles of the Big Economy, i.e., the global economy whose policies all too often dis-empower and exploit the poor and marginalized. His view was much more in keeping with that of Larry Rasmussen who speaks of the Great Economy, namely, the ecosphere or the cosmic household of God. In the economy of God's kingdom—the body of Christ—there is no competition for wealth, prestige, or power. Instead, each contributes to the flourishing of the other.

HOPE OF CONVERGENCE

Today, links are definitely being established between different peoples and are influencing their politics, economics and thought patterns in a spiraling motion that, despite sometimes-severe setbacks, moves inexorably upward—even if it appears to be doing so at a rate of less than an inch at a time. There have been major shifts on the political front, for example the fall of the Berlin Wall and the near collapse of the Soviet Empire that, prior to their occurring would have been ludicrous to suggest as being within the realm of possibility. The sacrifices of those who faced the onslaught of the tanks in Tiananmen Square have yet to come to fulfillment, however, as China's Communist party has maintained, even increased, tight control. Nevertheless, despite the official negation of the Tiananmen Massacre, there are those who, looking back, faithfully remember June 4, 1989 while looking to the future as they continue to work quietly to further human rights and intellectual freedom in China. The mother of one of the students killed on that day, when interviewed twenty years later, expressed her belief that eventually the totalitarian system would fail and that China would move toward democracy and the rule of law. Although not expecting such change to occur during her lifetime, she was firm in her belief that it would happen one day.

Teilhard de Chardin's vision of future convergence has already been fulfilled in other ways as well, for

example, through computer technology and the Internet, through satellites, space stations and cell phones. All these devices, none of which Teilhard de Chardin lived long enough to see, have helped shrink the size of our world while expanding our potential for connection with one another. Events and people that once seemed so distant as to have little or no impact on our lives are suddenly "up close and personal" as scenes of suffering beamed in from all quarters of the globe lead to recognition of our shared humanity. Think of the outpouring of assistance for the people of Haiti following the earthquake.

Another potentially fruitful way to maintain hope is to consider the eschatological perspective. Admittedly the eschatological approach is subject to criticism as there is no doubt of its being misused in order to maintain a negative status quo that serves the interests of the dominant and powerful rather than empowering those in need. The linking of suffering now with the attainment of a nebulous heavenly reward has in fact done damage to women, minorities and other poor, exploited people. The concept of our moving on toward a better world in some far-off heaven has also done great harm by driving a wedge between God and creation and has prompted a misuse of earth's resources, sacrificing the present world for some future paradise.

Nevertheless, there is an understanding of eschatology, theologian Gregory Brett assures us, that plays a positive and essential role, promoting hope. As Karl Rahner expressed it,

through faith we accept God's revelation as promise. We might think of Noah and the other survivors of the great flood when the rainbow was placed in the clouds as a sign of God's covenant, a covenant made not only with humankind but also with the earth and every living creature (Genesis 8:20–22 and 9:8–17). When we consider the ecological issues of our times, we need to be mindful of the covenant relationship that exists between God and the earth with its non-human inhabitants and of St. Paul's intuition of creation's yearning and hope: "We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time" (Romans 8:22).

HOPE REQUIRES ACTION

While participating in a course devoted to an exploration of the interface between science and theology, guest speaker John Haught impressed upon me and my colleagues the truth that "God calls to us from the future." In his opinion, were we to suppress the themes of hope and promise, we would fail to engage the heart and soul of the Christian tradition. But these hopes and promises do not absolve us from action in the present time. The eschatological future toward which the universe moves is not simply waiting to happen in a way that is unconnected to our present. The world is not simply the world of God's creation. It is also the world shaped by human action as we participate in God's creative activity. As a result, we need to



ct ethically with reference to creation rather than continue to destroy the ecological richness and diversity that have taken millions of years to develop. In light of our eschatological approach, we strive to preserve creation not simply because it is primarily of value to us but because of the great promise and potential it holds within itself.

Returning to the spirituality of Teilhard de Chardin, we are reminded that we are called to collaborate in the work of completing the world, a work that happens only over great periods of time requiring successive generations to accomplish. He cautions us not to view creation as something completed long ago, on the mythical Sixth Day. Instead, he encourages us to see creation continuing to evolve and to develop, moving toward its ultimate purpose. He urges us to live with an expectation of the parousia, the coming and abiding presence of the Cosmic Christ, to prepare for this coming, and to live in readiness for it. However, the longing he describes is not wishful thinking or the passivity of helplessness. Instead, we are enjoined to create intimate connections between our work in the world and the fulfillment of Christ. We are to fulfill our purpose in the Total Body of Christ, transforming the small piece of the world confided to our care.

The spirituality that Teilhard de Chardin describes in *The Divine Milieu* and that Savary elaborates upon in his companion book is one that calls for a change of mind and heart and invites us to action. Teilhard de Chardin noted in his work, "In action I adhere to the creative power of God. I coincide with it. I become not only its instrument but its living extension." Since connection with God is possible through any action performed with fervor and fidelity thanks to the pervasiveness of the Divine Milieu, there is no limit to the intensity or depth of our commitment to the work of the Body of Christ. In an effort to give some concrete structure to Teilhard de Chardin's message, Savary has interspersed his chapters with

suggestions and practices that may be helpful to those wishing to enter deeply into this spirituality. Rather than aiming at large scale change, he advocates we take advantage of small shifts in our minds and actions as even they build the body of Christ and prepare the way for the parousia.

SETTING ACHIEVABLE GOALS

In keeping with the approach advocated by Savary, psychologists McDermott and Snyder also point to the need to set realistic, achievable goals while working toward long-term change, breaking major goals down into small steps. Adopting an approach of this sort may prove beneficial in nurturing the light of hope while working toward goals that may be fulfilled only by the next generation. Gregory Brett, in his article relating eschatology to ecology, adopts a similar approach: *It is ultimately hope in the promise of future fulfillment for the entire creation that can lead us to take suitable actions in the present to save the environment.*

Marcia Ford, author of *Finding Hope Cultivating God's Gift of a Hopeful Spirit*, advocates our taking an active role in combating hopelessness, thus regaining our sense of empowerment and hope. Citing the work of Frances Moore Lappe, author of *Diet for a Small Planet*, she recommends we live lives consistent with our beliefs, take responsibility for our actions, be open to change, and be willing to take risks. Although originally formulated for use in a social justice setting, these four steps can be applied to most situations where we feel a need to bring the light of hope. Ford noted that living a lifestyle that contradicts our beliefs is one way to discourage the development of a hopeful spirit; another is the failure to take responsibility for our actions, as this robs us of a much needed sense of agency. Openness to change is essential, she insists, because hopelessness actively resists change, while the willingness to take risks fosters the possibility of

change in whatever arena we address. To these injunctions she adds the willingness to keep on working for desired change even if the change we seek is unlikely to occur in our lifetimes. She quotes Erich Fromm, whose words in *The Art of Loving* echo those of Ernst Bloch and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin as they remind us: *To hope means to be ready at every moment for that which is not yet born, and yet not become desperate if there is no birth in our lifetime.*

RECOMMENDED READING

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Mary Elizabeth Kenel, Ph.D., is a clinical psychologist who practices in Washington, D.C.

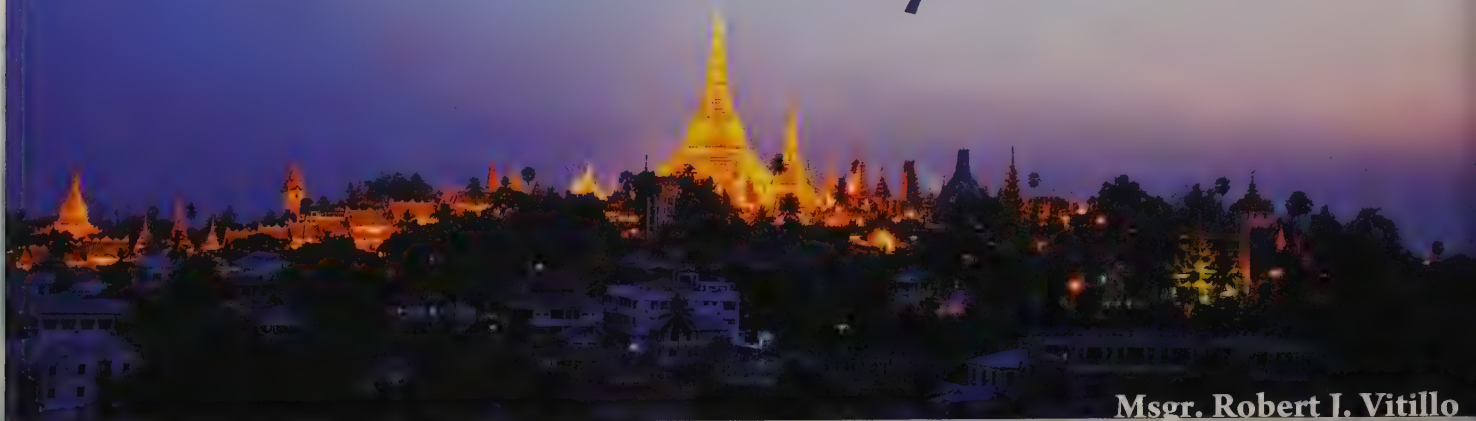
A scenic photograph of a snowy mountain landscape. In the background, a range of snow-capped mountains rises against a pale sky. The middle ground is filled with numerous evergreen trees, their branches heavily laden with snow. In the foreground, a calm body of water reflects the surrounding winter scene. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and serene.

*What Gives
Me*



HUMAN DEVELOPMENT asked four authors to reflect on the sources of hope in their lives and ministries today. Here are their thoughts.

Learning from God's "Little Ones"



Msgr. Robert J. Vitillo

My ministry—as Special Advisor on HIV and AIDS for Caritas Internationalis (the worldwide confederation of Catholic Charities organizations)—has allowed me to meet the virtue of hope in a practical but blessed way by learning from God's "little ones."

I would not dare to glamorize or romanticize the pain, suffering and loss experienced by those living with or affected by this global pandemic. It already has caused the early deaths of more than twenty-five million people and presently threatens the lives and well being of another thirty-three million in all parts of the world. Although increasing numbers of people living with HIV benefit from life-saving and life-prolonging anti-retroviral medications, many more have no access to such help. At least for the next few years, scientists do not foresee developing a cure or preventive vaccine. Moreover, millions of children have been orphaned due to the AIDS-related deaths of one or both parents and now try to fend for themselves in child-headed households.

Yet the very people living with or affected by HIV have taught me that hope goes far beyond the search for alleviation of physical, emotional, economic or social needs. For example, during workshops that I recently facilitated in Myanmar, Grace and Wilfred, a couple living with HIV, generously offered their testimony of life with this disease. They had already lost their three-year old son to AIDS, and both experienced near-death struggles with AIDS-related infections. But, through the love, care and help they received from the Sisters of the Good Shepherd in Yangon, they now experience the love of God so intensely that they have decided to live positively with AIDS. They found new jobs, recommitted themselves to their marriage, and now spend time helping others to adjust to life with this disease. They do all this, despite facing much rejection from their own family members and friends and

worrying about their own health situation (since they cannot afford anti-retroviral medications). During their testimonies to bishops, priests, religious and laypersons attending our workshops, they constantly affirmed that their prayers and the practical charity they receive from the church keeps them strong in faith, hope and love.

This witness by Grace and Wilfred reminded me of similar words expressed by St. Josephine Bakhita, who survived a horrendous life as a slave. She met Jesus, was called to religious life, and said: "I am definitively loved and whatever happens to me—I am awaited by this Love. And so my life is good." Thus, from God's beloved "little ones," I have been able to discern, in a practical way, the theological view of hope articulated by Pope Benedict XVI: "We need the greater and lesser hopes that keep us going day by day. But these are not enough without the great hope, which must surpass everything else. This great hope can only be God, who encompasses the whole of reality and who can bestow upon us what we, by ourselves, cannot attain" (*Spe Salvi*, #4, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20071130_spe-salvi_en.html).

Monsignor Robert J. Vitillo of the Diocese of Paterson, New Jersey, is head of the Caritas Internationalis delegation in Geneva, Switzerland, where he facilitates advocacy efforts related to health, HIV/AIDS, climate change and a range of other social and development issues.



Chest Full of Hope

Dawne Fleri

In my childhood, home was an apartment building built by my grandfather. I lived in that building with my parents, sisters, grandfather, aunts, uncles and cousins. It was a home for those who needed one. Some would come and go and come back again, but that place was always considered home. The furnishings, too, spoke of the ebb and flow of its inhabitants, except, that is, for my mother's own special piece of furniture which she called her hope chest. The chest was so beautiful and I thought of it as a chest full of hope. Even though it smelled of mothballs, holding those things my mother wanted protected from the "bugs," it was magical to me. My belief that something good is above and beyond all else came in the form of that chest. It was a place where hope and goodness would always reside.

With my seventieth birthday this year came the awareness that most of my life has already been lived. It will end just as it began. Each of us has so many endings and beginnings in our lives, it's hard to put it all in perspective. My married life ended when my husband, Joe, died suddenly and unexpectedly. His death left me shattered. It was a death of so many things we had created together and my life was forever changed.

These past years have also seen the most expected of endings with my children and grandchildren. Growing up in the blink of an eye, my grandchildren are busily preparing themselves for whatever life brings to their young, adult lives. My own children are in their forties experiencing all the endings and beginnings that life presents to them. As active parenting has ended for me, I have become as much their friend as their mother and grandmother. At this point in their lives my greatest contribution is loving them unconditionally. Most likely, that's all I have ever been called to do.

My professional life in lay ministry also ended more than eight years ago. Although it was difficult to leave behind the ministry that meant so much, it was wonderful to be free and available for whatever came each day. Ministering to families gave me a unique and profound experience of the ever-evolving

process of becoming a family. Families are both fertile and holy ground for experiencing life in its fullness. They are filled with everything that can be found in creation itself, a creation that carries within it real struggles and successes. Families are both living and dying, filled with hurts but also filled with happiness. This is what makes a family and therein lies hope. It is the hope that living together gives each of us another opportunity to grow more fully into who we are called to be—in this world, at this time, in this moment.

Struggling with the ambiguity I experience in loving unconditionally, I have grown into the awareness, the experience and the certainty that I am loved no less. With this certainty that my God loves me, hope is born. Hope, not in the future, not in the possibilities, not in my journey into death; hope is in the everyday. My heaven is being experienced right here, right now. Hope comes to me in the form of what I call the surprises of the spirit. I wait upon them each day. I laugh and I cry and I rejoice in those surprises. They have come from the poorest of the poor and the richest of the rich. They give me a glimpse of the miracle of love. Each surprise is life and each response is gift.

My mother's chest is now mine. It lives with me and reminds me of all that came before and all that will be today. It is the same hope that will accompany me into the future. Each day I am reminded that we all share in a common chest full of hope.



Dawne Fleri retired from pastoral work over eight years ago. She lives in Florida where she is busy with her adult children and grandchildren.

"Singing with the Younger"



Valerie Schultz

While I have never known the deep despair that prevents one from getting out of bed in the morning, I've felt a bit downhearted lately. The wars, the bitterness of the political climate, the economy, the church scandals, the graying of my hair and the wrinkling of my skin, the indignity of age, the sorrow of loss, are all wearing on me. I've begun to reflect that maybe hope, "the thing with feathers/that perches in the soul," as Emily Dickenson once wrote, gradually loses altitude as we age. Maybe it molts.

"As I get older," a friend said recently, "things that used to surprise me now scare me." My friend was referring to a man he knew, who had attended Mass every Sunday with his family, had gone to Communion faithfully, and then had gone home and regularly beaten and abused his wife and kids. My friend is a priest. The news that would have surprised him a few decades ago now made him fearful: it scared him that the Eucharistic meal, that means so much to him, could have so little lasting or nourishing effect on another. Maybe he's heard too many such stories.

Another friend talks about her elderly mother, who watches the news all day long and is consequently quite pessimistic about the future of the human race. It's as if her mother can't help but follow and lament the global doom portrayed in living color. The constant enumeration of tragedy in faraway lands is of more consequence to her than her own life. She is always depressed. My friend tries to tell her mother to spend less time with the TV anchorman and more time with her grandchildren, the young people who will actually be managing the future.

And I think my friend is exactly right. Young people offer us middle-aged or older folks a glimpse of the radiant immediacy of life. We have perhaps forgotten how to wrap ourselves up in that starry cloth. As I have gotten older, and as my daughters have become adults, I find I must consciously remind myself of what it was like to be their age. The story I use most often to recall my youthful hopefulness happened when my husband and I were first married. We were in our early twenties, full of light and possibility, chatting at my parents' kitchen table. My dear dad, since departed from this earth, was reading the paper. He was frowning; he looked tired in spite of his ever-present coffee. His mind full of the latest news of skyrocketing mortgage rates, inflation woes, and the savings-and-loan scandal of the early 1980s, he put the newspaper aside and looked at us gravely. "How are you two ever going to be able to buy a house?" he asked.

And I remember feeling astonished, first, that he was so sad about this; second, that he thought we were supposed to be sad about this. My thoughts went something like this: Buy a house? What was my dad talking about? Who said anything about wanting to own a house? Who cared? We wanted to travel! Be unencumbered! Be free! I felt like laughing at him, but restricted myself to a smile out of respect for his old and heavy values. How little he understood about us, I thought.

Eventually, of course, the economy turned around, we grew up and bought (or financed at low, low rates) a succession of houses in which to raise our children, and all was well, or reasonably so. But I understand now my dad's pessimism about our future, because lately I wonder how, in the present disastrous economy, my kids will ever be able to afford the



things we managed to do. I have to remember to pause, take in breath, let it out, and repeat. As I travel the cycles of life, I play new role each time. It helps me immeasurably to be mindful of the person I used to be, as well as the person I am becoming. It lends me balance, and perspective, and levity.

The longer we live, the more we run the risk of being weighed down by experience, of imagining the worst possible outcomes for all situations, of expecting tragedy to befall those we love, of believing—contrary to hard evidence—that the world used to be a better, friendlier place, of succumbing to fear and despair.

I recently heard a new song that the folksinger Pete Seeger co-wrote, which goes in part like this:

When we sing with younger folk,
We can never give up hope:
God's counting on me!
God's counting on you!
Hopin' we'll all pull through,
Me and you. . .

And I was comforted. I felt energized and ratified. I think I am in love with this song. I looked up its lyrics online. I even watched Pete Seeger sing it with a bunch of musicians on YouTube. Pete Seeger has got to be a hundred years old, and unless his protesting, guitar-strumming, harmonizing heart, he's still hopin'. (He's actually 91: no disrespect.) His song reminds us all that the 'younger folk' are the ones who keep the rest of us singing on a hopeful note. Growing old needn't mean surrendering one's ideals, Pete tells us: keep the song going! His latest song chews on the meat of life: God's counting on me, and God's counting on you, to do our parts and to make a dif-

ference, and there is no age requirement or limit for this work. Says another verse:

Don't give up; don't give in;
There's a better world to win—
God's counting on me!
God's counting on you. . .

There's no room for despair in that lifelong commitment.

We are apt to wallow in negativity when times are hard, when things don't go well or as planned. We are sometimes drawn to darkness, even though God sprinkles our paths with light. As we age, we are in danger of growing too tired to keep our spirits up or to fight the good fight, as St. Paul summed up his life work (2 Timothy 4:7). Sometimes we just don't see the point. But we are only irrelevant if we deem ourselves so: surely God did not create us to do nothing. On the contrary, God's counting on us! When (or if) our evolving maturity guides us to respond to God's embrace, we understand that hope is more powerful than despair. And when a thing with feathers molts, it is to make way for new growth, fresh feathers, and unimagined, exhilarating flight.



Valerie Schultz is a freelance writer and a weekly columnist for *The Bakersfield Californian*. She is married with four daughters.



There is a line in the Talmud that says “We see things not as they are, but as we are.” If this is true, our view of reality at the moment is probably cynical or jaundiced, colored by the wretched failures of key leaders within our civic, fiscal and religious institutions. The dominant view abroad is that this disillusionment is most acute within the Catholic Church. Many people are hurt, disappointed, aggrieved and disillusioned at how the church has handled the ongoing trauma of the sex abuse scandals.

The popular view is that the “we” who are members of the Catholic Church have lost confidence and trust in the “they” who are the leadership. Commentators who are expert on “we” declare the church to be in some kind of terminal decline, a slump that is irredeemable. I would suggest that such a view does not reflect how things actually are on the ground and the health of the church is much more robust than many commentators would have us believe.

The church has always been something of a contradiction, numbering saints and sinners among its members. She is a “chaste harlot,” as St Augustine put it, and she is invariably *ecclesia semper reformanda* (the church always reforming). Undoubtedly sin has the unerring capacity to damage the Body of Christ and its virulent repercussions throughout the church cannot be ignored. But sin does not have the last say. Christ has conquered sin by his death and resurrection, and through the gift of His Spirit the church continues to renew

and reform itself. How do we know this? Simply put, at the grassroots level the church is very much alive today and planning for its future. To illustrate this I would like to cite some developments taking place in the Irish church which has been embroiled in scandal and controversy over the last few years.

On June 8, 2010, in St Patrick’s Cathedral in the Archdiocese of Armagh, Cardinal Seán Brady and Bishop Gerard Clifford commissioned almost three-hundred lay women and men who had undergone several months of training to take up new leadership roles within the archdiocese. This development was the fruit of many years consultation between all of the faithful and it marked a significant moment in the ongoing evolution of the local church.

Cardinal Brady announced the new “diocesan aim” and promulgated the Diocesan Pastoral Council Constitution that will guide the unfolding of the pastoral plan. The membership of this council reflects all the various states of life within the church, but the vast majority are lay people. The new pastoral areas will have clerical and lay leadership acting in unison as co-responsible for the pastoral life of their areas. This is as it should be.

Other developments speak concretely about how vibrant the church actually is in the cross-border archdiocese of Armagh. In the last year over one-hundred people completed a year’s study of theology at two centers in Drogheda and in

e at the Grass Roots



Armagh. Stringent child safeguarding reforms have been applied across the diocese with a host of volunteer laity acting in child protection roles. There is constant ongoing training of parish pastoral councils.

We should not be at all surprised by the resilience of the church. The life of the church is the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit and there is a divine guarantee she will not be left orphaned. There is a lovely line in the Mass that says, "From age to age you call a people to yourself."

However, church structures exist to serve and to protect the life of the church. They are not cast in stone and they are subject to the laws of change and decay as is any human institution. Venerable structures that have been central to how the Irish church and the global church operate are no longer viable because these were heavily dependent on priests and religious whose numbers are in steep decline.

Central to all of this ongoing change and renewal is the rediscovery of the call of baptism. Jesus reminds us, "You did not choose me but I chose you to go and bear fruit, a fruit that will last" (John 15:16). The Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar understood the vital importance of this baptismal commissioning by Christ. He characterized the laity as a "sleeping giant" who needed to awaken and take up its rightful role within the life of the church.

We are on the threshold of that awakening. Pope Benedict XVI, speaking in Rome in May 2009, reminded his clergy that the laity must no longer be viewed as "collaborators" of the clergy

but truly recognized as "co-responsible" for the life of the church. I see evidence of that happening, often under the radar, in a host of settings. As the Venerable Bede said, "The church gives birth to the church." We are witnessing, in the midst of all our travails, the ongoing birthing of the church. New life is emerging. All will be well!



Dr. Tony Hanna is Director of the Pastoral Plan for the Archdiocese of Armagh, Ireland.

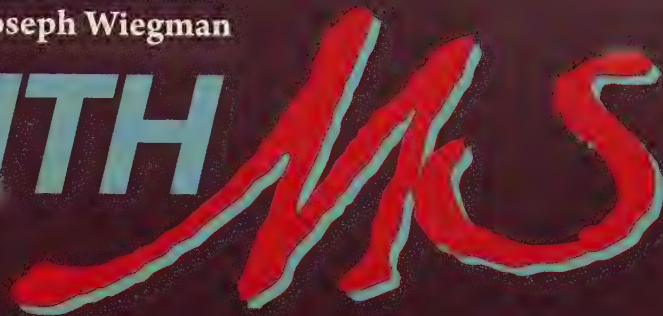
My journey of living as a person with multiple sclerosis (MS) has nearly paralleled my journey of living as a Catholic priest. I was diagnosed as having MS on March 12, 1991. I was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Toledo, Ohio on June 8, 1991. Needless to say, dealing with a chronic disease was not exactly on my "to-do" list as I prepared for priestly ordination. God had other plans.

After nineteen years of traveling this dual-journey, I have come to a more profound understanding of what it means to do God's will. Like everyone, I suppose, I still struggle with this discipleship; but, by the grace of God, I continue to grow in my ability to accept my crosses. To *embrace* my crosses.

In 1969, Elisabeth Kubler-Ross published *On Death and Dying*, in which she delineated the stages of processing grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance (Kubler-Ross, 1969). She made clear that these stages are not necessarily experienced sequentially, and that every grieving person does not necessarily experience every stage.

The stages of processing grief have informed the journey of my integration of MS with priesthood. As I look back on my journey, there seem to be five somewhat distinct stages: denial, bargaining, acceptance, anger/depression, embracing. They generally correspond to my five different priestly assignments. The last stage, "embracing," is not delineated by Kubler-Ross.

JOURNEY WITH



ut I believe it to be at the heart of my identity as a Christian and as a Catholic priest.

In this article, I reflect on the temptation I experienced at each stage. I am influenced in this regard by Henri Nouwen. In 1989, he published *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership*, in which he delineates three different temptations of leaders. They are: the temptation to be relevant, the temptation to be spectacular, and the temptation to be powerful. The first two seem to apply to the first two stages of my priesthood; for the remaining three stages, I build on the foundation laid by Nouwen, and name my temptation, myself. The idea of "temptation" is powerful for me. I have chosen to follow the path of Jesus Christ in my life, my ministry and my sickness. I think I'm pretty good at staying focused, but sometimes I stumble. When I reflect on my stumblings, I often find that I have, in some way, pretended that I can do it" on my own. I must always remember that God is God, and I am not.

I conclude each stage with an illustration of someone from the New Testament. I limit myself to the Christian scriptures not because the Hebrew scriptures are irrelevant to me, but because I am interested in people who lived with Jesus—people who would have encountered him on a regular basis, and would have been challenged by him to live according to his message of discipleship—the same way that I feel I am challenged.

DENIAL (1991 TO 1993)

In my first assignment as associate pastor at St. John the Baptist, a medium-sized suburban Toledo parish, it was easy enough to act as if everything was fine: I had no MS symptoms. I loved being there, and I pretended as if MS wasn't a reality for me. After a couple of years, however, physical symptoms began to manifest themselves, and I knew it was time to seek an assignment that was more "MS-friendly." The letter I wrote to the diocesan personnel board sounded almost apologetic. It was, perhaps, my last attempt to remain in denial: "I'm not seeking this move so much as a re-action but as a pro-action. . . I continue to be a healthy priest of the Diocese of Toledo."

Early in my priesthood, I'm sure (now) that I fell victim to the "temptation to be spectacular." Truth be told, as a new priest, I wanted people to like me. I wanted people to be impressed with me. I wanted to be a "mouthpiece of the Lord," so that people would feel inspired by me. I didn't identify myself as a person with a chronic illness; it just didn't seem to fit with being spectacular.

A person in the New Testament who illustrated my feelings at that point in my priesthood is Martha. We hear in the Gospel of Luke (10:38-42) that Martha was "concerned about many things." She was concerned, of course, about the details of hospitality. Like Martha, I was concerned about details in my first priestly assignment—the details of being a priest. Most priests understand this: we want to learn what to do,

how to speak, where the resources are. As understandable as this focus was, it probably contributed to my denial that there was anything different about my priesthood.

BARGAINING (1993 TO 1998)

I spent the next years ministering to the Catholic students at Bowling Green State University. It was great, but in the course of those years, my MS continued to progress. My bargaining was with God, in prayer: "God, I can handle using a cane, but no more;" then, "Okay, God, I've adjusted to using forearm crutches, but please, let this be it;" then, "God, the electric scooter with the walker attached are working out okay, but I can't deal with anything more." Each time I thought I was at my limit, I adjusted to more advanced mobility aids. Only, of course, by my cooperation with the grace of God.

The Nouwen temptation that seems to apply to this stage of my priesthood is the temptation to be relevant. I was probably too concerned about being someone to whom the college students could relate. It's not that I was trying to be their friend (thank the Lord!); but I realize, now, that I wanted to be relevant enough that college students would feel comfortable coming to me. I may have believed that relevancy required more energy from me than for most Christian leaders/campus ministers: I had the additional hurdle of being a person with disabilities. The more gear I used, the less relevant I became, or so I thought. Recovering addicts might call this, "Stinkin' thinkin'."



"I will be your follower, Lord, but first, I have to..." (Luke 9:57-62). This unnamed would-be disciple illustrates, I believe, my bargaining. Like him, I had my own priorities; instead of remaining focused on my discipleship, I let myself get distracted by details. For me, the details were my physical condition and the sophistication of my mobility aids. For me, sadly, preoccupation with such details sometimes took priority over the kingdom of God.

ACCEPTANCE (1998 TO 2004)

I was asked by the president/rector of Saint Meinrad School of Theology (my alma mater) to return to join the formation staff as a spiritual director. "He knows what he's getting," I figured. After prayer and conversation, I realized that God was truly calling me to this ministry. Those were good years: I felt as if I was an instrument of God with the seminarians, and while my MS didn't get any better, it also didn't get much worse. During the summers, I was even able to complete a master's in spirituality at Creighton

University. I felt much more comfortable with being a person with disabilities. "God is finally agreeing with me," I could have thought at the time. I didn't know that God was strengthening me to agree with *him*.

I will build on the foundation laid by Nouwen by departing from him, and by labeling this stage as my temptation to be theoretical about my priesthood. Even though one of the strengths I brought to my ministry with the seminarians was my own pastoral experience, I may have (too often, anyway) thought about my priesthood relative to the ideals set forth in *Pastores dabo vobis* (Pope John Paul II, 1992). A good thing, but not as real as I could have been; for example, being a priest—with disabilities—didn't enter into the picture of priesthood I discussed. My more theoretical approach was bolstered by my teaching the courses, Pastoral Leadership and The Spirituality of Priesthood.

One of my favorite scripture stories is Jesus walking on the water (Matthew 14:22-33). I like it, in part, because I can relate to Peter: the leader, the one who had the answers, the Rock.

This story highlights Peter's shadow. He trusted too much in himself, in his own abilities; that mode worked for a while, but Peter would have drowned without the help of Jesus. I am like Peter. He illustrates for me the futility of self-reliance, and the reality that comfort can quickly become discomfort. And Jesus' hand is always there to save.

ANGER/DEPRESSION (2004 TO 2006)

After leaving Saint Meinrad, I became an associate pastor at St. Michael the Archangel Parish in Findlay. It was a good fit. Unfortunately, almost immediately, my MS continued to progress. Because I was so happy to be in parish ministry again, there was probably a bit of recurrence of denial that something was wrong. After less than eight months, however, I could no longer pretend. An exacerbation of MS symptoms landed me in the hospital, then a rehabilitation hospital, then a nursing home. "How can I be a priest," I asked God, "lying in a bed all day,

arely able to move?" I was mad, I was sad. After over a year of being on a health leave of absence, I felt as if it was time to return to active ministry. I was stronger, but was still fairly disabled. "What can I do in a wheelchair?" I wondered.

I was tempted to give in and give up. My own label for this stage of my priesthood is the temptation to fall into despondency—my awareness that things weren't going *my* way. As a licensed counselor (I received my education and license while at Bowling Green), I am well aware that depression can affect *anyone*; therefore, priests are not immune to this disease. Depressed priests, however, are not ideal witnesses of the Good News of the salvation won for humanity by Jesus Christ; therefore, in addition to being angry and depressed, I also experienced some guilt. Very different from the way Jesus felt.

My New Testament illustration for this stage is Jesus, himself. As he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane before his betrayal and arrest (Mark 14:32–42), Jesus said, "Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me." My prayer for myself was the same, as I lay in a hospital bed, unable to move. I didn't surrender to the Father's will as readily as Jesus did; but still, in the midst of my grief, I somehow knew that God had not abandoned me. I clung to the hope that, with God, all things are possible.

EMBRACING (2006 TO 2010)

A priest-friend invited me to join, part-time, the staff of a Catholic high school in Oregon, just east of Toledo. At the same time, I became a resident and part-time chaplain at a Little Sisters of the Poor home, three miles away. I still am amazed by how it all fell into place. God had to have been involved. For three and one-half years, I felt effective and peaceful. As I later learned, peacefulness is not dependent upon effectiveness.

As my MS continued to slowly progress, I had to stop (hand-controlled) driving in October, 2009, then leave high school ministry in December, 2009. I was mad and sad about this, but not devastated (like I felt when I left parish ministry in early 2005). The difference? I knew I still had a place to minister; but it was more than that. I had a more developed awareness that God *has* never, and *will* never, abandon me.

It used to frustrate me when people told me that I had "such a good attitude" and/or "sense of humor," or that they "could never do what I do." I usually said, "Thank you," or "Thanks be to God;" but what I was *thinking* was more like, "Yes, you could! I'm just doing what I *have* to do. *Anybody* can do that!" I've learned, however, that not everyone *can* adjust to loss the way that I've adjusted. Living in a nursing home, for example, means that I have encountered people much older than me (I'm 49) who are upset about not being able to work, not being able to drive, not being able to live independently—all things with which *I'm* dealing. I try to be patient, because I realize that no matter how old a person gets, loss is loss is loss. A period of grieving is necessary.

But it can't stop there. While disease has taken away many of my physical abilities, I believe each day is a new invitation to trust that the God who has always held my hand—in good times and in bad—isn't going to let go now or in the future. "Thy will be done," we pray in the Our Father. I've realized how fruitless it is to try to convince God to see things *my* way. Now, after nineteen years of priesthood and a series of steps forward and backward in my relationship with God, I've discovered the simple truth that I must try to see things *God's* way. I'm getting better at this embracing of my crosses, even though I don't always understand them or like them.

I believe that right now, I struggle with the temptation to be satisfied. My

*I'm getting better
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don't always
understand them
or like them.*

head gets bigger, for example, when my neurologists tell me they wish *all* of their MS patients were doing as well as I'm doing. I know *I'm* doing fine; but there are still days when I feel guilty that I'm not doing more in my priesthood, or when I feel sad that I'll probably spend the rest of my life and ministry in a nursing home. Clearly, I'm not always as evolved as I'd like to be! Still, I know I'm more healthy (emotionally and spiritually) than many people would be in my situation. I've got to remember to be dissatisfied with this reality. God never ceases to call me (and all of us) to something more, something deeper, something better.

As my journey of integration of MS and priesthood began with an illustration of the New Testament figure of Martha, it seems appropriate that it end (at least for now) with an illustration of Mary (Luke 10:38–42). Mary, of course, sat at the feet of Jesus. She wasn't concerned about the details of hospitality, as her sister was. Mary was content to simply be present to the Lord; and this, I believe, is *my* call (at least for now). Mostly, I'm getting past comparing myself to my classmates, for example, who are busy doing priesthood. I still am able to do some things (like presiding at celebrations of the sacraments), but I have another calling: to focus on being a priest. I must sit at the feet of the Lord in prayer; I must sit at the feet of the elderly poor in ministry; I must sit at the feet of my crosses, even as I embrace them. All are ways of seeking the face of God.

CONCLUSION

On March 13, 1991 (the day after my MS diagnosis), Fr. Eugene, a monk of Saint Meinrad Archabbey and then president/rector of the seminary, called me to his office. After listening to my story, I'm sure he responded quite empathetically. What I really remember, though, is something he said towards the end of our time together. He said,

"Joe, you don't get to choose whether or not you have MS. Here it is; but you *do* get to choose what you're going to do about it."

My own grieving doesn't dominate my life because I choose not to let it. I choose to do what I can with what I got. I choose to focus on the reality that I am a child of God and a priest of God, no matter my physical abilities and disabilities; this, I believe, is at the heart of my adjustment to having a progressive disease, at the heart of my good attitude and sense of humor, at the heart of my discipleship and faith.

This may read as if I feel I've got it all figured out. I know I don't. To illustrate, I recently was the guest priest-presider at the university parish in Bowling Green. I had the introduction/preface to the penitential rite all figured out. It was, I thought, a nice synthesis of humor, insight, and theology. When the Mass intention was announced before the opening song, I began to weep like a baby. The intention was for Mary Alice Hayes, a sixty-something woman who lived in Bowling Green, was a permanent member of the university parish, and was someone I visited regularly when I was assigned there. She was my inspiration, because while she had MS (more advanced than mine, at the time), she was always in good spirits. I already knew of her death, which took place a couple of years ago. I don't like losing my composure (I continued crying through some of the Liturgy of the Word), especially in public, at Mass; but I also believe that *God's* plans trump our own.

As a seminarian, I never really understood the apostle Paul's proclamation that there is power in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9) "That's fine for you, Paul" I thought, "but I'd rather be strong, thank you very much." Now, I get what Paul was talking about. As long as we act as if we are in control of our lives, we leave little room for God. We leave little room for our dependence

upon God or the love God wants to shower upon us—his children—when we acknowledge him as Father.

I keep close to the sink in my bathroom a copy of the "Principle and Foundation" that prefaces the Spiritual Exercises. "Man was created to praise, reverence, and serve God," says St. Ignatius of Loyola. I try to pray this at the beginning of each day (thus its placement!) to remind myself that, ultimately, I need not prefer health over sickness. Living as a priest with MS is the way that I am being called to praise, reverence, and serve God and God's people. The only way this might happen, I feel, is to *embrace* my crosses. Not just accept them, but to see them as the God-given path of my priesthood and my life.

RECOMMENDED READING

Kubler-Ross, E. *On Death and Dying*. New York: Scribner, 1969.

Nouwen, H.J.M. *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership*. New York: Crossroad, 1989.

Pope John Paul II. *Pastores Dabo Vobis: Apostolic Exhortation on the Circumstances of the Formation of Priests in the Present Day*. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_25031992_pastores-dabo-vobis_en.html, 1992



Father Joseph Weigman, priest and spiritual director of the Diocese of Toledo, OH, is also a licensed counselor in the state of Ohio.

I was a Jesuit scholastic in my early twenties when I was trying to absorb scholastic philosophy. My faculty proved God's existence so emphatically that no reasonable person could refuse to believe. On a lowering day in 1952, I refused. I still remember the room I was in and what I was doing when the words spoke themselves in me: "I do not believe in God." I then lived a long, dark time alone. I did not even tell my confessor.

Had I enough brains to disbelieve, surrounded as I was by brilliant believing minds? G. K. Chesterton, who had died when I was a boy, exulted in St. Thomas' ordered brilliance in discussing God. For my part, I was scandalized by Thomistic certitude. We parodied "No business like show business" this way: "There's no *ism* like Thomism, there's no *ism* I know" ending on the high note: "they're so sure that they know!" It was funny, but no joke.

The dark eventually ended. How it ended fits a pattern of disillusionment

common today among those who turn to spirituality. I discovered that I was disillusioned not of God and belief, any more than Aquinas had been, for all his thinking. I was disillusioned of the powers of the human mind. When the dark lifted, I actually had a stronger commitment to a living God than I had had before my disbelief.

My disillusionment was a double one: To begin with, I rejected the false illusion that the human mind can encompass the infinite. I find it entirely finite; any understanding of the infinite God is, itself, finite. The mind comes across realities its science cannot reasonably deny, cannot run its experiments on, and cannot explain. These realities can only be called mysteries and they are as real as rain. Like it, they will no go away.

And then, secondly, I rejected as a false illusion that my religion and spirituality could be entirely rational—or even perfectly reasonable. I had to experience a truth harder to hold onto than dryness in a world of wet. *I am*

going to destroy the wisdom of the wise and bring to nothing the understanding of any who understand. Where are the philosophers? Where are the experts? (1 Corinthians 1:19). This is a dreadful loss and only some prayerful people are willing to suffer it.

After fifty years of giving spiritual direction and retreats, I am persuaded that this double disillusionment underlies the current widespread turn to spirituality. The experience is complicated and difficult to state.

FROM MYSTERY TO PROBLEM

Modernity—it was underway in Ignatius' day and its ending began around the time I was studying philosophy—modernity attempted to change every mystery that confounds into a problem to solve. That is what science has done, with stupendous success, with the mysteries of time and space. That is also what Christian thinkers did. As Taylor (2007)

Disillusionments and the Turn to Spirituality

Joseph A. Tetlow, S.J.



describes this narrowing: "Their arguments turned exclusively on demonstrating God as Creator, and showing his Providence" (225). In defending the reasonableness of belief in God, the men teaching me had transmuted the mystery of the Wholly Other into what John Courtney Murray (1964) studied as *The Problem of God*. We have needed disillusionment from that, as the currently popular Karen Armstrong (2009) has urged.

This rationalism reached even into the practice of the *Spiritual Exercises*. The Principle and Foundation makes the famous brief statement that "Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord and so save his soul" (*Spiritual Exercises*, 23). When we studied the Exercises in the 1950s, we were told that this was the philosophical foundation on which the whole spiritual edifice is built. But then we discovered that Ignatius of Loyola knew little theology and no philosophy at all when he was shaping his and others' experiences into the *Spiritual Exercises*.

Now we are also learning that by "God our Lord" Ignatius meant Jesus Christ. We are noticing that the very first colloquy assigned in the retreat is to stand beneath Jesus on the cross and ask ourselves, "What have I done for Christ? What am I doing? What might I do?" It's hard for us now, disillusioned of this putative philosophical foundation, to imagine how these questions rose from Aristotle. We have turned away from that to the real basis of Ignatian spirituality, his illumination at the Cardoner that in him were created all things in heaven and on earth: everything visible and everything invisible (Colossians 1:16). And through him all things will return to God.

TWO ILLUSIONS, TWO DISILLUSIONS

Catholics today necessarily retain some of the illusions or enchantments both of our secular lives and of our religious lives. Our secular illusion is that we can *create for ourselves full human flourishing in this life*, a human flourishing without reference to anything transcendent. Our religious illusion, pragmatic as we are, is our fixed hope to *earn* eternal life.

So we are liable to disillusionment in both secular life and religious life. The disillusionments come in stages, strike differently in distinct social groups, and are therefore spread unevenly in the population. But wherever the disillusion is strong and we are driven by the quest for meaning, we turn to what we now call "spirituality." What are the elements in this turn?

THE ILLUSIONS IN SECULARISM

First, consider the illusions in our secular society. We envision a self freed of restraints and even obligations. "I gotta be me" is as much a repudiation as an affirmation, rejecting any norms and purposes not from within my self and of my own choosing. We have great difficulty envisioning a *final end*. In spiritual conversation, we have to talk about an *original purpose*. This complicates the Ignatian emphasis on living under a creating, saving God who can and does make demands on us.

Charles Taylor argues in *Sources of the Self* that it also signals how deeply we have gone into expressive individualism (1989). In this mindset, we expect each person to find within the self the purpose of self, life and the world. Who

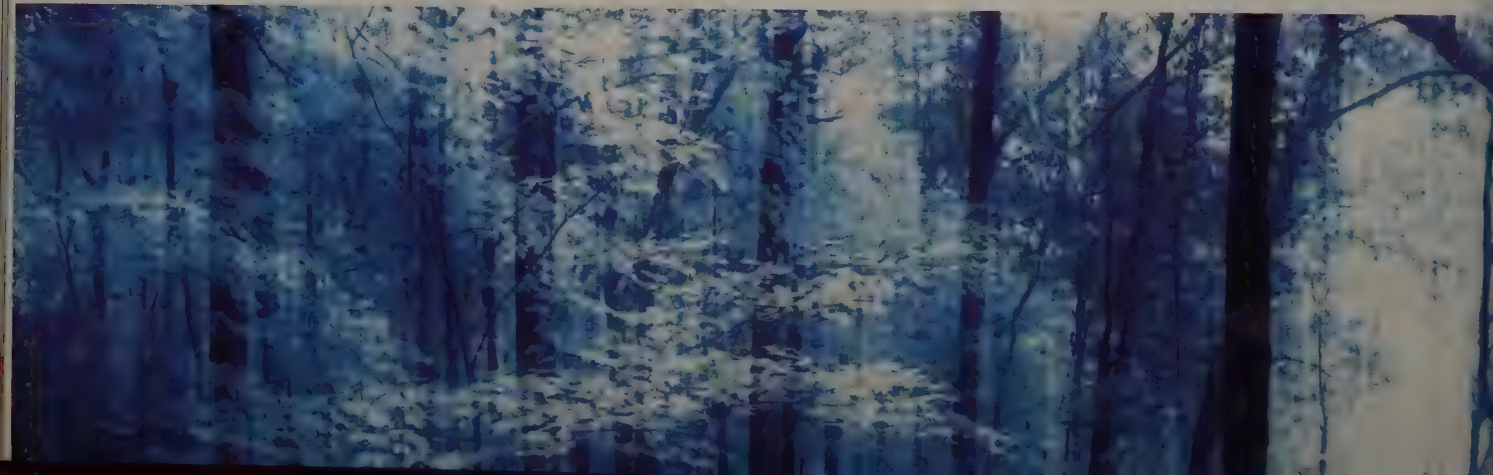
needs God? Nietzsche was right: God is dead. Humanity has to handle everything by ourselves. This modernist illusion was parodied a century ago by Thomas Seymour:

We don't believe in a God anymore
Any more than in fairies or elves,
Roll ova Jehova we don' need a
prime mova
We only believe in Ourselves.
For we are omniscient—
omnipotent too
And We really begin to suspect
That creation created itself for
Ourselves
And left it to Us to perfect
(Pearce, 1999, 443).

God is gone from the marketplace and the courts. No Ten Commandments on Town Hall lawns; no crucifixes in classrooms. "For modern man, ignorant of the purpose for which he was created, the only function of politics, economics and art was to further his greed, his animal lusts and his desire for power" (Pearce, 368). Society does not support belief as it did even when I was a boy. Taylor (2007) argues persuasively that we are the first people among whom atheism is as accepted as is belief. This is not theoretical: successful men and women tell me that they simply do not make their faith known in their law firms or business offices. They are strong believers, so what is going on?

THE ILLUSIONS IN AMERICAN RELIGION

Second: the illusions in our religious world. Catholics, especially the younger, expect the faith to give



meaning to their lives without cost or any special effort, much the way English serves as their language freely and without any special effort. Challenged by college life or just by life itself, they experience disillusionment. They find they have to work to believe; they have to make an effort to hope. They may grow wiser with this disillusionment. George Santayana, the agnostic who died just as I was struggling with my agnosticism, contended that disillusionment brings wisdom.

Wisdom may come with disillusionment, but not all disillusionment leads to wisdom. Instead of growing wiser, many simply leave the church or else live half in and half out. They keep their shape, work a career, live most comfortably, and sometimes do some volunteer work—all the while attending Sunday Mass. They are living what columnist David Brooks calls “the higher selfishness.” Wealthy parishes seem to have a lot of them. They do not much turn to spirituality since their human fulfillment is going fine. It remains hard for the rich to enter into the kingdom.

To them, the challenge presented by the *Suscipe* prayer, an offering of the whole self and life to God, seems to be for somebody else. Those who do accept the invitation to the *magis*—the *more*—have to yield the secular illusion of personal fulfillment before death. The Call of the King promises mainly labor and suffering (*Spiritual Exercises*, 91). Ignatian spirituality asks the secularist to “re-illusion” the self to an experience that will transcend time. We have to achieve this still steeped in a culture that demands human fulfillment in the present, all the while denying death.

Many—if not most—of those who turn to spirituality are not looking for something *magis*, more. Their focus is not on society but on self. So in turning to spirituality, they are seeking less an interior life lived with spiritual discipline than a religious life lived with interior conviction. Ignatius met this cohort so commonly that he accommodated them in the *Spiritual Exercises*. They are seeking, he wrote, for “some peace of soul.” (*Spiritual Exercises*, 18). In my experience, this is the larger part of the Catholic population—and of the

Christian, to judge by my limited experience teaching ecumenical groups in the Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University.

Most people who have been in touch with are looking for a little meaning in their lives, not for a challenge to move beyond where they are now. They are content to live with their unreflected convictions. They are not interested in reaching for something more or reflecting on principles. I wonder whether this may not be where the Lord wants them, never mind what the current fashion in spirituality may be.

THE ORDER IN SELF-REALIZATION

Master Ignatius postulated in the first paragraph that the *Spiritual Exercises* presented “every way of preparing and disposing the soul to rid itself of all the disordered tendencies, and, after it is rid, to seek and find the Divine Will as to the management of one’s life for the salvation of the soul.” He knew—we are learning—that not everyone wants to rid themselves of their tendencies. Furthermore, he knew that many people do not have the natural abilities, inclination, or even plain desire to do this. This is still quite true today.

The current search for spirituality seems to proceed in a modern illusion: everyone is created equal, even in the life of grace. Everyone has the same access to God’s love and God’s will. This is the leveling begun with the Protestant Reformers who abolished the hierarchy of holiness sought in the religious life, in the conviction that everyone has equal access to holiness.

That conviction is an illusion. Ignatian spirituality invites us to let go of it. In giving spiritual counsel, we see clearly that God deals with each person, not just differently but also unevenly, which leaves us with groups and classes. We are plainly not all “equal” in the gifts and graces that God lavishes on us, even if we are equal in the redemption given us in Christ. We do not have equally significant vocations, even if *each has only what the Lord has given him* (1 Corinthians 3:6). We need not suppose that those who fail to aspire to the holiness of an Elizabeth Ann Seton are rejecting God’s will. Some retreatants can finish the *Exercises* and some cannot,

though all can save their souls. Ignatius in the *Spiritual Exercises* was clearer on this than we seem to be [18b].

Apparently as a part of that leveling, Catholics by and large have also been disillusioned of the fruitfulness—and even the possibility—of living a disciplined interior life. Part of the ground of this is a change from experiencing my *soul* to experiencing my *self*. Whatever else is true, the *soul* inescapably implies transcendence and a life after death. But the *self* is fluid, partial, provisional, pliable—made orderly, in current conviction, only at the expense of creativity and spontaneity. We calmly claim, “Oh, I am not like that any more.” *Soul* better expresses the whole, historical, and unremittingly eternal *self*. But we do not talk about our *souls* any more; we talk only about our *selves*. Those who turn to spirituality have to struggle to hold onto the permanent self, the soul (Unger, 109).

THE SELF AND AUTHENTIC DESIRING

One debilitating American illusion comes in the form of believing that any tendency I feel, as long as it is “authentic,” is by definition ordered to my good (leaving aside the good of those around me). We live under the illusion that doing my own thing, being authentic, will *ipso facto* be the proper management of my life. James Conner et al. (2006) point out that this finesses millennia of wisdom about virtue and vice and also turns a blind eye to psychiatry’s unconscious, subconscious and archetypes (37 ff). That has not frayed the conviction that I gotta do my own thing. With the advent of offspring, or by midlife, we are commonly disillusioned. So we turn to spirituality and trust that we can discern God’s will.

Talk today about discernment reveals a related illusion: that everyone has ready, indeed easy, access to their true desires, to their deepest authentic desires. Ignatian spirituality makes a very different presupposition about our authentic desiring. Jesuit Bernard Lonergan (1990) considered “authenticity” our “deepest need and most prized achievement” (254). None stumble onto their deepest desire; we presume that finding it requires a

disciplined life of prayer. We presume further that every one of us has attachments to things, persons, experiences and even to meanings that skew us and diminish our ability to know our deepest desire. Many are willing to grow detached provided they do not have to give up the things they are most attached to.

An almost universal illusion is that my authentic desires as a follower of Jesus Christ will lead me somewhere other than to the cross. Very many who married with holy aspirations and enchantment have faced the cross where they expected a safe bed. And many have accepted ordination as priests expecting their ordination to solve their human weaknesses only to find themselves worse than they had yet imagined.

GUILT AND HOLINESS

The exercise that begins the thirty-day experience places the retreatant beneath Jesus hanging on his cross. It urges that the retreatant ask how it came about that he is there and I am not, sinless as he is and sinful as I am. In the lifetime of those of us in our 70s and 80s, this was almost a common religious practice. But in my experience of giving retreats, people do not now enter into this prayer very deeply because we do not feel any connection with Jesus' sufferings. Moderns lack a sense of guilt before God. One Baptist theologian told me that even the most fundamentalist among them lack a sense of personal guilt, but suffer a corrosive sense of social sin. One intelligent middle-aged Catholic, as he approached the end of long months of prayer in the Exercises in Daily Life, said to me, "I don't commit any sins." He needs disillusionment of this conviction if he is to be a disciple of the One who said that he had come to call sinners (Aschenbrenner, 1972).

A shift in moral theology contributed to this illusion of sinlessness. Where once we knew quite concretely what thoughts and actions were sinful, we now face a new understanding of conscience. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994) states that "conscience includes the reception of the principles of morality (synderesis); their application

in the given circumstances by practical discernment of reasons and goods; and finally judgment about concrete acts" (1780). We once gave to conscience the choice between sin and not sin; the choice between good things, we assigned to discernment. In the turn to spirituality, we have conflated the two and conscience has lost out. People of all ages come to confession with no real sense of having sinned.

DISCERNMENT OF SPIRITS

To Ignatius, the word *discernment* meant a definite way of coming to know what God wants me to do with my life or what great reform I need to beg for. We all took that meaning when I was a young religious before Vatican II. A half-century later, discernment has so many meanings that it is truly what Uwe Poerksen called a *plastic word*. It can be molded to fit any experience.

In this democratization of meaning, Ignatian discernment of spirits has grown thin and some who attempt it finish distinctly disillusioned. One determining context for this is the secular loss of belief in spirits. The *Catechism* teaches the existence and activity of spirits good (333) and evil (391). But Americans—the ordinary Catholic included—do not sense how spirits work inside our selves for their own aims and purposes. Taylor (2007) finds that to the modern, "the idea of spirits, moral forces, causal powers with a purposive bent, [is] close to incomprehensible" (239).

I find that true even of people who wholeheartedly turn to spirituality. We experience our selves as "buffered," free from influences that we do not choose to let in. Nothing can affect me on its own terms; I will decide how any experience affects me. On this ground college students think they will decide how "hooking up" will affect them, as though there were no norms or even some common experience.

These illusions have made very difficult, and in most situations impossible, the practice of Ignatian discernment of spirits. Much of what good people propose to me as this discernment is actually an attempt to find out what they, themselves, really feel about a situation or a decision. They need instruction if not disillusioning.

TO KNOW HIM BETTER

The Exercises and the spirituality growing from them focus on the imitation of Christ, who *only did what he saw the Father doing*, all the way to the Cross (John 5:19). One of the religious illusions powerful during the twentieth century was that a disciple can follow Jesus and remain quite comfortably ensconced in his life-world. When a spirituality confronts these disciples with the embrace of the cross—as the *Spiritual Exercises* do—most in the past century preferred the 1960s piety of Malcolm Boyd's *Are You Running with Me, Jesus?* (1965).

Far from piety, true knowledge of Jesus Christ transmutes our whole being. It is *assimilative*, that is, intimate knowledge of Jesus will help *the disciple to grow like the teacher* (Matthew 10:24). Very many disciples pursuing some spirituality cannot even imagine that. The illusion of a "sweet Jesus" continues strong.

Through contemplation on the life of Jesus of Nazareth, however, the willing can allow a fuller assimilation. We can enter into the life of Jesus not as a bit of history, but as our own story. We are *participants* in the human drama of incarnation, passion and resurrection. In making the *Spiritual Exercises*, we ask to "know him more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly," as a Medieval mystic put it. It happens. One mature man held the baby Jesus. A woman felt Jesus' arm over her shoulders. A German-trained theologian felt the wood of the cross.

Some popular books, like Jesuit William Sampson's *Meeting Jesus*, have guided readers into this experience (1991). I have found that some who come seeking spirituality are able and willing to enter into this kind of prayer. Many are not. Too often a little Bible study has conditioned them. Adela Yarbro Collins wrote in *America* that many Americans "want to know in what ways the Gospels represent the actual Jesus accurately and in what ways they are fictions or later theological interpretations of Jesus that contradict or go beyond what historians can determine about the past" (Aug. 30, 2010, 19).

Maybe so. But in my personal experience and in the experiences recounted to me, that is rarely the hankering of those who turn to spirituality. They know from experience that no amount

scripture scholarship will bring everyone to *crucify the self with all passions and its desires* (Galatians 24). When parishioners finished a whole study course in one local parish, they wanted to know, What's next? Now that they know about the gospels, how do they find God in Christ?

THE ILLUSIONS OF HUMANISM

Our contemporaries do not find God in much of anything. The intelligentsia today—university professors and serious columnists—are largely agnostic. They think as did Ernst Bloch, the influential German Marxist who died in 1977. He tried after World War II to find some reason for hope other than belief in God. He wrote in "Man as Possibility" (1977): "About this world we can have knowledge, and in an uninterruptedly deterministic manner. This is the world of natural science, the real world within which reigns unbreakable order, though without trace of freedom, immortality, or God" (57).

It is tempting to think that there are little gods involved here—vague beings who explain things, whose laws the thinkers follow, to whom they sacrifice their time and energies: Destiny (the Greek goddesses Moirae), for instance, or Chance (the Latin goddess Fortuna). The intelligentsia's praise, reverence and service of these little gods create an illusion for the smarter young. These people are to be disillusioned of the conviction that religion is unreal because it cannot be tested by the laws of physics. The ones who cling to the "real world" of Bloch are worshipping yet another little god, Mind.

The many who are drifting out of the church in agnosticism have been disillusioned of an orderly universe that has purpose and aim. They are like Stephen Hawking; they do not see that *ever since the creation of the world, the visible existence of God and his everlasting power have been clearly seen by the mind's understanding of created things* (Romans 1:20). They have eyes but do not see.

On his deathbed, an ex-Catholic declared to me that he did not see how God could be so universal, taking care of so many things at once. The question, "What about love—it's everywhere, isn't it?" sparked the beginning of disillusionment with his little gods, but I had to leave before it got very far.

LEARNING TO LOVE THE WAY GOD LOVES

The disillusioned who seek spirituality in the Ignatian ~~manner~~ are invited to find God in all things in a specific way. A summary of this way emerges clearly in the final contemplation in the *Spiritual Exercises*, [230]: *Contemplatio ad amorem*—a contemplation in four points to learn to love the way God loves.

Almost all those who make the thirty-day retreat, or who pray through the Exercises over a number of months, interiorize the first two considerations, that God gives gifts and that God remains present in his gifts. For love is done, not just talked about, and love is steady mutual sharing. This way, they can find God present in their lives.

Fewer absorb the third point, that God continues acting in his gifts. Probably this has to do with knowing God as a God of love, peace, beauty, truth and mercy. In any case, few people can make room in their heart and mind-set for a busy God, the God who is our ongoing creator and constant redeemer. Jesus of Nazareth grasped this: *The Son can do only what he sees the Father doing* (John 5:19). That is an astonishing statement for a man to make. Yet it says no more than "I'm doing God's will." For God is always acting, always creating, and what God wills, God is doing.

The full meaning of this emerges only in the fourth point of the *Contemplatio*: we participate in God's intentions, energies and actions. We are truly adopted children with our brother Jesus Christ and share his divinity. When I do what God wants done, I am giving glory to God as *an untarnished mirror of God's power at work in the world* (Wisdom 7:26).

That is no false illusion but neither is it a scientifically established truth or some kind of participation in a vague Mind. Actually, it is the well-founded hope that gives us life.

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Father Joseph A. Tetlow, S.J., leads the Spiritual Exercises at Montserrat Jesuit Retreat House in Lake Dallas, Texas.



James Torrens

SURVIVING THE

Have you ever noticed, as you read the psalms, how frequent are the ups and downs—or downs and ups—within a single psalm? Dejection or desolation sounds out, with hopeful notes following. As prayers, the psalms are precious to us, because mostly they terminate upbeat, but not without dragging us through desperate conditions.

Consider Psalm 77, a community lament. It can sound as if it was written during the Holocaust: "When I think of God, I groan; / as I ponder, my spirit grows faint. . . . Has God's love ceased forever? / Has the promise failed for all ages?" Without a "but" or "however" or "nonetheless," the text swings into remembrance of the saving deeds of the Lord, God's wonders of old, with the purpose of renewing faith in the divine help.

Psalm 126 celebrates a happy reversal of fortune for the Chosen People, no doubt their return from captivity in Babylon. Yet the focus shifts right away to an anxious petition about an uncertain future. It almost sounds as if the return had not happened after all. "The Lord had done great things for us; / Oh, how happy we were! / Restore again our fortunes, Lord, / like the dry stream beds of the Negeb." Once more we have an appeal to God's action in the past, so as in a bleak time to bolster hopes.

This alternating current, with prolonged attention to the negative pole, is palpable in the two psalms which point directly to the passion and death of Jesus, Psalms 22 and 69. The gospel writers Matthew, Mark and Luke, accentuating the theme of fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, shape their account of the last few hours of Jesus with the help of these psalms. The cry of utter desolation that opens Psalm 22, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me," is also the last

word of Jesus on the cross, according to Matthew and Mark. In this psalm, which seems so prescient about the cruel death of the Messiah, the distress builds up unbearably, until the speaker's plea for deliverance suddenly turns into an assurance of being heard. "Then I will proclaim your name to the assembly; / in the community I will praise you." The speaker professes that God "did not turn away from me, / but heard me when I cried out."

How much crying out there is in the psalms, as if life held nothing but obstacles, enemies and dangers. Certainly that holds true for Psalm 69, which begins, "Save me, O God, for the waters have reached my neck." It goes on at this rate for almost thirty verses, until an unexpected but confident turn around: "But I am afflicted and in pain; Let your saving help protect me, God. . . . See you lowly ones, and be glad. . . . for the Lord hears the poor."

My favorite example of this alternating current comes in Psalm 42, a three-part unity. Its beginning is well known, set to music so beautifully a half-century ago by Pere Gelineau: "As the deer longs for streams of water, / so my soul longs for you, O God." This image is certainly drawn from life and is still pertinent. The deer that crashed into our car at night this summer, near Lake Tahoe in California, was dashing across Highway 89 to the Truckee River.

The psalmist, far from the Temple in Jerusalem, is remembering the festive procession he had once been a jubilant part of, and he is bemoaning his separation from it. "Why are you downcast, my soul; / why do you groan within me?" How plaintive these words are, how full of anguish at the apparent absence of God. How much they resonate with human



experience of all eras. This outcry, repeated towards the end of each of the three parts, is each time followed by these hopeful words: "Wait for God, whom I shall praise again, / my savior and my God." Distress first, then utter tranquility.

My poem included here records the summer-vacation encounter mentioned above, injurious to car as much as deer. Soon afterwards we drove in a borrowed pick-up through luminous tracts of forest to Ashland, for the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Deer had been out of view along the way, but they turned up again in Ashland, just as surprisingly. A doe and her fawns appeared in front of our motel on a Sunday morning, as if out for a walk, and crossed the nearby boulevard to another neighborhood.

Deer are loved and dreaded throughout the West and the rest of the country. Loved because they are so beautiful and sweet, dreaded because they love what we try to grow. One must stay aware of their depredations and rejoice in them at the same time, because they image the deepest and most hopeful of our desires.



Father James Torrens, S.J., lives in Fresno, California, at the pastoral center of the diocese, and serves in ministry to the diocese.



Fleet Spirits

Deer and not bear our totem.
Buck with a sprout of horns,
thirsty for the river, bolts
from the dark woods, slam
into our headlights. Its head
looms as an afterimage.

Our forest, however rife
with bald spots, is sanctuary.
All the antlers in barrooms,
over mantels, replenish.
No walking in the woods
without their fleet company.

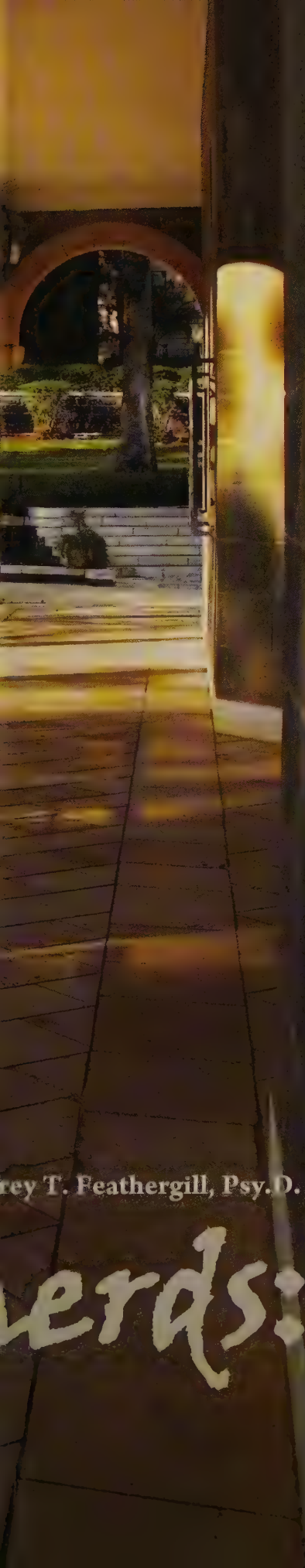
A doe steps along our street,
a doe and two fawns. They cross
with dignity, cars in abeyance.
They have been browsing gardens,
the roses most to their taste.
"Your habitat," they say, "our
haunt."

James Torrens, S.J.



Finding Good She

A Catholic Psychologist Reports and Reflects on the Conference
"A Necessary Conversation: A Gathering of Exp



rey T. Feathergill, Psy.D.

words:

O n June 14, 2010, the St. John Vianney Center and St. Charles Borromeo Seminary sponsored a five-day seminar in Philadelphia entitled, "A Necessary Conversation: A Gathering of Experts." The conference was developed in response to the Vatican's document, *Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in the Admission and Formation of Candidates for the Priesthood*, (hereinafter *Guidelines*) that was released in 2008. Attendees included formation directors, vocation directors, seminary rectors, bishops, and psychologists who evaluate and provide psychological care to seminarians while they are in the process of formation.

Several years earlier, in the fall of 2007, I was asked to join a group of psychologists who provide psychological evaluations of seminary applicants for a local religious community. I was honored and intrigued at this opportunity, both as a psychologist and as a Catholic layperson who is concerned for the leadership of the church. There are unique challenges in conducting a psychological assessment of a seminary applicant. Not only does the psychological evaluation screen for mental health issues, the evaluator must address a variety of questions that have been developed in response to the crisis of clerical sexual abuse. Very personal and private realms of the lives of applicants must be examined, including issues such as their complete sexual history including masturbation habits and use of pornography. The psychologist explores the applicant's life history in depth, assesses whether or not he has the right motives for seeking a vocation, and determines if he has the

underlying abilities he will need to function successfully as a priest. The evaluation also seeks to identify any patterns of behavior or personality that would suggest that the candidate is not a good match for a vocation to the priesthood. Objective and projective personality tests are administered to provide clinical data used in assessing the candidate. The process typically causes some significant concern for the applicants who wonder how they will be perceived and what might be discovered about them in the process. Some applicants also fear that psychological testing might be erroneous and make assumptions about them that simply are not true. Such psychological evaluations have been conducted for many years in dioceses and religious communities in the United States without any official recommendations from the Vatican.

My colleagues and I received the *Guidelines* in 2008 and began to discuss its contents together with the vocation directors with whom we work. We endeavored to understand some of the assertions and positions found in the *Guidelines* and questioned the meaning intended by the authors in the use of some psychological terms and developmental concepts. We were pleased, therefore, to hear about the conference and I made arrangements to attend. Fr. Gerald McGlone, S.J., one of the conference organizers, subsequently asked me to serve on a panel that engaged attendees in discussion of the presentations.

Entering the grounds of St. Charles Borromeo Seminary, I immediately focused on the grand and sprawling historic buildings. I recalled my own experience of entering the gates of

St. Mary of the Lake Seminary in Mundelein, Illinois, as a young seminarian in 1978, and the awesome feelings that were evoked when I considered the magnitude of the church as an institution and the aesthetical sensitivity that went into church architecture. I wondered about the seminarians who entered this realm in the twenty-first century and considered how the triumphant religious edifices before me at St. Charles Borromeo were perceived by men raised in a world of modern technologies, mass media and secular dominance. I began to appreciate what an opportunity the conference would provide for psychologists to actually stay at a seminary for a week, reside in the small, undecorated rooms with single beds, dine together in the "refectory," and worship daily at the Liturgy of the Hours and Mass.

CLARIFYING PSYCHOLOGY'S ROLE AND THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

The structure and format of the conference encouraged dialogue, with presentations in the morning and break-out groups in the afternoon where participants discussed the morning sessions and reviewed case studies. Day one featured two keynote addresses, one by Len Sperry, M.D., Ph.D., who described psychology's role in seminary formation, and compared prior involvement of psychologists with the recently published *Guidelines*.

Dr. Sperry introduced the topic of the kind of theoretical orientation required to adequately evaluate and provide care to seminarians. He contrasted traditional models of psychology, which tend to disregard notions of God or transcendence, with a psychology grounded in Catholic anthropology. A Catholic anthropology, according to Sperry, views the person as created in God's image and likeness and views human nature as good. "The human person is not simply material, but is substantially one, bodily, interpersonally

relational, rational and volitional with free choice. The person is redeemed and has a transcendent purpose, which is to increase the kingdom of God in the world." Sperry emphasized the importance of these views for psychologists who conduct psychological assessments for seminary applicants or provide care to seminarians.

Sperry also articulated that the role of the psychologist in assessment is more descriptive, not predictive. The typical psychological assessments conducted for screening seminary candidates are not capable of predicting future behavior, for example, the likelihood that an individual will become a pedophile at some point later in life. This assertion is essential to psychologists who evaluate seminarians. In the 1970s, psychologists and other mental health professionals assured church leaders that after receiving "successful" treatment, priests who had committed acts of sexual abuse could safely return to active ministry. Tragically, such predictions did not hold up and many priests went back into ministry and to commit further acts of sexual abuse. The early detection of potential sexual offenders is not possible with current assessment techniques used to evaluate seminarians. Sperry suggested that psychological evaluators might consider the use of Robert D. Hare's Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R). The use of this instrument requires specialized training.

Sperry's presentation included important information for providing psychological care to seminarians in formation. In my work with seminarians who seek counseling or psychotherapy I typically inquire about their relationships with seminary administrators, faculty, and classmates. I find that problems experienced in these relationships sometimes reveal a need for intervention beyond just the individual client. I was pleased, therefore, that Sperry highlighted organizational dynamics present in seminaries, which psychologists should

consider when providing assessment and treatment to seminarians. Sperry stated that to fully comprehend and explain behavior in a seminary, religious order, or diocese, the psychologist must consider problems at the organizational level. Organizational dynamics within the Catholic Church either increase or reduce the likelihood of unhealthy/abusive behavior. Stated in the vernacular, Sperry quipped, "Sometimes it's not just a bad apple—it's a bad barrel." Sperry indicated that insights from organizational psychology can help understand and identify the cultural realities of a seminary such as "strategy, vision, core values, structure and leadership styles."

Sperry also discussed the role of clerical culture, which can contain a sense of privilege, entitlement, separateness and status. He identified "clericalism" as the downside of clerical culture, which fosters narcissistic entitlement, emotional immaturity, an authoritarian style of ministerial leadership, a rigid hierarchical worldview and identification of holiness and grace in the church with the clerical state. Several psychologists I spoke with expressed concern with the increase in seminary applicants who seem to identify with an authoritarian, hierarchical view of priesthood, and deem the vocation of priesthood as holier than the vocation of married life within the Catholic Church. The psychologists I spoke with expressed their concern based upon their understanding of the role of such attitudes in the church's sexual abuse scandals. Some priests also spoke of their concern about conservative "trends" within the church that seem to promote a return to pre-Vatican II attitudes and practices that fit Sperry's description of clericalism. The pendulum swing between conservative and liberal Catholicism will no doubt continue and reflects, perhaps, the Holy Spirit's efforts to lead the Catholic Church to truth. Where there is a link between practices and attitudes, liberal or conservative,

sociated with any kind of undesirable behavior by priests, it remains imperative that psychologists and clergy work together to prevent further scandals and abuse.

AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON DEVELOPMENT OF THE GUIDELINES

The second keynote address was given by Archbishop J. Michael Miller, S.B., of Vancouver and one of the authors of the *Guidelines*. He spoke on the church's view of the role of psychology in seminary formation and compared current practices to previous ones. In explaining the *Guidelines*, Archbishop Miller provided important background information on the development of the *Guidelines* for psychologists. He addressed the reasons that the document had been in development for over twenty years. These included suspicion of the discipline of psychology and the work of psychologists in Rome, as well as in many European cultures. He also provided some fascinating and firming background information that encouraged the involvement of the field of psychology in the work of the church. The *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* at the Second Vatican Council endorsed the concept that a profound knowledge of the human person relies not only on theology, but also on the human sciences. He also shared that in 1967 Pope Paul VI affirmed that psychologists could assist priests who struggled with the commitment to celibacy and chastity. At that time there was a sense of urgency because of the significant number of individuals leaving religious life and the priesthood. There was a developing awareness of the need for psychologists who understood the issues facing seminarians and priests. Subsequent popes and Vatican documents have emphasized that Catholic anthropology must undergird any use of psychology in the assessment

and formation of seminarians. The document on psychologists' role goes so far as to indicate that the psychologists who provide these services should be "believers" within the Catholic Church.

As psychologists who function under the Ethical Principles of the American Psychological Association, my colleagues and I tend to think first and foremost about the rights of our clients. We closely adhere to ethical principles and relevant laws regarding informed consent, confidentiality and access to and maintenance of records when conducting assessments or providing care to seminarians. Equivalently, Archbishop Miller underscored that the authors of the *Guidelines* wanted to establish unequivocally the rights of those being evaluated. He pointed out the parts of the document that addressed issues of confidentiality, informed consent and access to records.

When my colleagues and I reviewed the *Guidelines* we noted an assertion that psychological assessment should only take place in some cases. In the United States, however, it has become a standard practice of most dioceses and religious communities to screen all applicants. Archbishop Miller revealed the thinking behind the *Guidelines'* position that an applicant should only be referred for a psychological assessment "*si cassus ferrat*" (if the case merits it). He directed our attention to the document's insistence that while there are clear definitions for the role of a psychologist in conducting the assessment, the ultimate decision of a candidate's acceptance resides in the hands of responsible individuals within the seminary, diocese or religious community. Archbishop Miller also noted the differences in reliance on psychologists based upon various countries' own attitudes and history. He shared that among the writers of the *Guidelines* there was pastoral sensitivity for individuals considering a vocation to the priesthood because psychological testing can be intrusive. The priests and

*The Pastoral
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Modern World at
the Second Vatican
Council endorsed
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of the human
person relies not
only on theology,
but also on the
human sciences.*

psychologists with whom I discussed the issue at the conference agreed that psychological testing in the United States should remain a requirement of all candidates. By making it a standard part of the admissions process, applicants can be made aware that they have not been singled out. With adequate informed consent processes and skilled and sensitive evaluators, the discomfort of the assessment process can be ameliorated to a significant degree.

DESIGNING AN EFFECTIVE EVALUATION FORMAT

The conference provided a thorough and well developed body of information to assist psychologists, vocation directors and formation staff with the development of acceptable psychological assessment procedures. Ronald J. Karney, Ph.D., and Fr. Gerard Francik, offered a presentation entitled, "Issues in the Psychological Assessment of Seminary Candidates." Dr. Karney described guidelines for vocation directors to use in selecting a psychologist to conduct assessments. He explained the purposes of a psychological evaluation and provided excellent recommendations on the components of an effective evaluation. A standard psychological evaluation typically involves a referral question. Dr. Karney stressed that the vocation directors should develop spe-

cific referral questions after careful review of the application materials and any other concerns that develop during the application process. Specific questions allow the evaluating psychologist to target the assessment in ways that do not overlook essential areas for inquiry. Dr. Karney also developed a "best practice" recommendation that involved ongoing communication and dialogue between the vocation director and psychologist. I was impressed by the extent that Dr. Karney refined and clarified the process of evaluation. If his recommendations are followed and other necessary conditions are met, the vocation director should receive a valid, reliable and helpful psychological report.

Fr. Francik offered a perspective on the evaluation process from the viewpoint of a vocation director. He emphasized the sacredness of the psychological assessment and the importance of respect for what the church is asking of those who apply for entrance into the seminary. He recommended that all psychologists who perform assessments read the document, "*Pastores Dabo Vobis*" (I Will Give You Shepherds) by Pope John Paul II. He also introduced the role of issues in human development that must be considered in the evaluation of seminary applicants.

DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES

In evaluating candidates for the seminary, how does one assess for an applicant's achievement of developmental milestones and the quality of their development? Does an applicant possess the capacity to be flexible and accommodating so that he can work collaboratively with others? Does he show interest and involvement with interpersonal relationships? Has he attained the capacity for intimacy in which one confides easily to another person and is comfortable with emotionally close relationships? At the conference Deacon Douglas Crawford presented Erik Erickson's theories on developmental stages and reviewed their applicability to the evaluation and formation processes for seminarians. His presentation stressed the importance of considering developmental processes thoroughly in conducting assessments and in evaluating a seminarian's progress while in seminary. He also referred to the insights of Attachment Theory in considering a seminarian's attitudes toward self and others.

For the seminarian bound for a life committed to chastity and celibacy, this component of the evaluation takes on a particular focus. Priests, while remaining chaste and celibate, still have a need for intimacy and must have the capacity to engage in intimate rela-



ships of a non-sexual nature with those to whom they minister. In Catholic anthropology, God calls a person to serve as a priest in order to demonstrate his love for his people. When I ask a seminary applicant to describe what celibacy means to him, he will invariably say something like, "giving up marriage to one person so that you can be available to love all of God's people." For a psychologist evaluating a seminary applicant, a sense that one is called to a life of celibacy might be confused with rejection of intimacy. Psychologists, therefore, must incorporate and consider developmental milestones from the perspective of Catholic anthropology.

INCORPORATING INSIGHTS FROM A CATHOLIC ANTHROPOLOGY IN ASSESSMENT

On day four of the conference Fr. Gerald McGlone and others provided presentation solely for the psychologists in attendance. In it they sought to demonstrate the convergence of psychological assessment principles and Catholic anthropology. McGlone's presentation suggested that the scientific aspirations of psychology need not be sacrificed by incorporating a Catholic worldview in an assessment of seminary applicants.

The behavioral and developmental matters explored by a psychologist in the assessment should include the concept of Christian living. The psychologist should explore whether or not the seminary applicant, as a follower of Christ, has put what he knows of God and Christ into action behaviorally. Similarly, the psychologist must consider developmental issues that pertain to the candidate's growth as a Christian. The assessment of seminarians need not discount contributions from psychological theories about human development such as genetic coding, cultural or societal programming or inherent drives. Optimally,

however, human development proceeds along Christian lines only through a response to the call to live our lives in the service of others. Grace from God infuses a person who is willing to accept this call and fosters his development into fullness as a Christian being. The psychologist's task includes the determination as to how this dimension of development is proceeding for the candidate.

McGlone also referenced the four pillars of priestly formation that Pope John Paul identified in *Pastores Dabo Vobis* as helpful to psychologists in evaluating seminarians. The four pillars are human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral. While the human and intellectual pillars might be more comfortable for most psychologists, incorporating spiritual and pastoral domains in the assessment process is essential. In order to be thorough, an assessment report must, according to McGlone, address each of these areas. In his understanding, a best practice model would "use the best of science and theology" rather than only one or the other.

CONTROVERSY OVER SEXUALITY

Perhaps the most charged moment of the conference occurred on day four following Bishop Gerald T. Walsh's reflection on issues in the determination of a candidate's appropriateness for admission to the seminary. The *Guidelines* state that men who "actively practice homosexuality" should be barred. The *Guidelines* remain somewhat obscure, however, when they instruct that candidates should be rejected who "show profoundly deep-rooted homosexual tendencies." Bishop Walsh indicated that homosexual tendencies may not require the rejection of a person as a candidate to the seminary. He noted that some priests who may struggle with their sexual orientation are also capable of living chaste, devout and celibate lives. One of the attendees responded to these

statements with a question that highlights the deep divide in Catholicism on the issue of homosexuality. The attendee asked how the bishop could possibly sanction the ordination of a person who is likely to engage in homosexual activity since homosexuality is the "sin that cries to heaven."

The bishop responded to this question with sensitivity to the plight of those who might admit to homosexual feelings, but are committed to lives of celibacy. He also made it clear that he considered homosexual activity to be a moral evil. Rev. Michael Spitzer, another presenter, responded saying that "If a man has struggled with same-sex attraction it doesn't mean that he is incapable of living a chaste, celibate life and re-directing his sexual feelings toward service in love for God and his neighbor." He also highlighted a pamphlet produced by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops entitled "Ministry to Persons with Homosexual Orientation," which makes the distinction between homosexual tendencies and homosexual activity quite clear. In follow-up discussions one member expressed worry that Church leaders incorrectly equate homosexuality with a propensity to commit sexual abuse. Fr. McGlone, however, had advised that it is a major mistake to confuse homosexual orientation with sexual abuse, and noted that the vast number of priests who sexually abused young males identified themselves as heterosexual.

Clearly, the issue of sexual orientation remains a complex and unresolved issue in relation to vocations to the priesthood. Those involved in the assessment and formation of seminarians must find a way to work through two divergent views regarding homosexuality depending on the source. "Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, [140] tradition has always declared that 'homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered'" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*. §2357). The American

Psychological Association, however, takes quite another view: "The research on homosexuality is very clear. Homosexuality is neither mental illness nor moral depravity. It is simply the way a minority of our population expresses human love and sexuality. Study after study documents the mental health of gay men and lesbians. Studies of judgment, stability, reliability, and social and vocational adaptation all show that gay men and lesbians function every bit as well as heterosexuals" (*The American Psychological Association's Statement on Homosexuality*, 1994-JUL).

Fr. McGlone indicated in his presentation that there could be a whole conference on the topic of sexuality and the priesthood. In the meantime, psychologists and those responsible for the selection and formation of seminarians will continue to wrestle with this issue. It is hoped that the church leaders responsible for the *Guidelines* will provide clarification on their intention in restricting those with "deep-seated homosexual tendencies" from admission to the seminary.

ONGOING COLLABORATION

The conference closed with a presentation entitled, "Ongoing Collaboration: Challenges and Opportunities" by Fr. Gerald McGlone and Fernando Ortiz, Ph.D. This presentation began the process of summarizing the conference's accomplishments and set out a format for further dialogue. McGlone encouraged psychologists to "borrow the heart and vision" of the vocation director and formation staff in conducting assessments and providing care. He and Dr. Ortiz presented an excellent synthesis and developmental model for those called to priesthood.

From my perspective, the conference accomplished many positive goals. It provided attendees with a number of recommended policies, practices and principles that should result in improved outcomes in this work. The ample time for informal discussions between psychologists and those involved in vocation and formation work helped us develop a deeper

appreciation for one another that will improve our working relationships. Many of the priests in attendance also held doctoral degrees in psychology and their wisdom and breadth of knowledge contributed extensively to the conference. Psychologists gained skills to more fully integrate a Catholic anthropology into psychological evaluation and treatment. Priests gained a greater understanding of psychological principles and procedures used in conducting assessments and providing treatment. A group of psychologists and clergy formed a committee to examine the possible creation of a certification process for those who provide psychological evaluations for seminary applicants. In the meantime, those who conduct assessments and provide treatment to seminarians can now access a wealth of information created at the conference.

The door has been opened for a better understanding and improved dialogue between those involved in the discernment of new vocations to the Roman Catholic priesthood. The men and women who attended this conference represented a significant number of those involved in determination of future vocations to the priesthood in the United States. The "necessary conversation" has begun and will no doubt continue and expand. Several issues remain unresolved and in need of further exploration. Conference organizers stated that they plan to hold a future conference to explore cross-cultural dimensions in the assessment and formations process. The psychological and formational resources available from this conference will further guide all those working to find and assist men in becoming the kind of priests identified by Pope John Paul II in *Pastores Dabo Vobis*: "I will give you shepherds after my own heart" (Jeremiah 3:15).

RECOMMENDED READING

American Psychological Association
Statement on Homosexuality
<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/sexual-orientation.aspx>

Catechism of the Catholic Church
http://www.vatican.va/archive/catechism/ccc_toc.htm

Congregation for Catholic Education
Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in the Admission and Formation of Candidates for the Priesthood
http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc

Erikson, *Childhood and Society*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1950

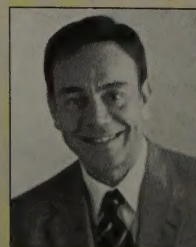
Ethical Principles of the American Psychological Association
<http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/index.aspx>

Hare, R.D. *Hare Psychopathy Checklist Revised* (1991). Multi-Health Systems 908 Niagara Falls Blvd, North Tonawanda, New York, 14120-2060.

Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium Et Spes)
http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html

Pope John Paul II. *Pastores Dabo Vobis*
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_25031992_pastores-dabo-vobis_en.html

Jeffrey T. Feathergill Psy.D., is in private practice in South Bend, Indiana, providing psychotherapy and psychological testing. He has worked with a number of religious communities conducting psychological assessments for those applying to enter seminaries and religious life.



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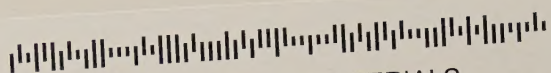
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